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BEATRICE

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BEATRICE

AND OTHER POEMS

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BY

THE HON. RODEN NOEL

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BEATRICE

Book I

After a childhood weakly, timid, shy,
Whereon the common boy-experience
That braces vigorous constitution fell
Like rustling of some paper, or the grate
On stones of carriage-wheel upon the sick,
Clement lost mother and a sister dear
In early boyhood; to his clinging heart
And nature passionate, susceptible,
Deep was the wound, loss irremediable.
Yet from a spirit's shipwreck was he saved
By a wise friend and kindly, having wit
To touch the secret spring that laid to view
High capabilities all undivined
Of plodding fools; his crampèd soul uncoiled
Woke from her lethargy with slakeless thirst
For questioning the how and why of all, deep thirst
For beauty, all the beauty in the world,
With many a tremor nerving her to dare

The steep imperial Conscience motioned from.
Proud, wilful, passionate, and self-involved,
He grew a dreamer tender and devout;
Yet, with sore travail of a soul sincere,
Soon drifted from his anchorage of creed
Ever away, albeit to the last
His mother's words, example, and her love
He owned his spirit's richest sustenance.
But as youth wore the longing came upon him
For venturesome experience afar
Of men diverse and stranger lands remote;
Yet opening keen senses upon all,
Maturing healthful vigour of the frame,
So winning richer relish of mere life,
Still yearned his restless spirit, hungering
For sustenance of sympathy and love.
Twice was he foiled—early by circumstance:
He the blond Northern youth, and she the child
Of Southern suns and moons, daughter of fire,
Drew to a mutual embrace, but shrank
Baffled at finding that which seemed free air
Was crystal fate duty forbade to break.
Later there foiled him human treachery:
A fascinating woman beautiful
Out on the hunt for fresh experience
Of diverse men, and gifted to assume
At will the semblance of their sentiments,
As does the mocking bird the notes of others,

Toyed with the boy, half serious half in sport,
But when she won him to a fond caress,
Wearied, and spying a new creature pass,
Out of the sleek and velvet paw there stole
A cruel claw into his bosom soft.
Long he lay bleeding, yet with dauntless heart
Rallying, he resumed the sacred quest,
Blaspheming not the holy thing he sought.

In lowly guise and in a lowly spot,
And yet not lowlier than where Christ was born,
He came upon it after seeking long.
For in a mountain district in a fray
Between some mountaineers with whom he dwelt
He, chosen for mediator by a chance,
Was wounded sore and carried to a cottage
Of porch festooned with purple columbine;
And entering, with feverish dim sight
Beneath roof-wattles blackened of the smoke
He saw a maiden by the ingle fire
Stooping above a cauldron grimed and huge
Slung in the ingle from an iron hook,
Who tended what was boiling, fondling soft
The while a cat of drowsy eye that purred
Upon a chair—a maiden in blue serge
Wearing red-printed kerchief for her neck—
Who turning showed the face that on his soul
Would beam in warmth and light for evermore.

'Twas hard to fix the colour of her eyes:
They seemed to liquefy and melt beneath
Your own, and lure you into labyrinths
Of sweet infinitude, rich shrines of love,
Dissolved in love as summer skies in light;
He only saw the child-face all suffused
From those seraphic eyes—he saw no more—
Unless indeed sleek shining rings of hair,
Fair hair on warm white neck and o'er her shoulders;
For as the door was opened, flowed the sun
Full on her as if waiting eagerly,
Impatient for admittance to the child—
Flowed over delicate ankle and slim feet
And over the frail figure, kissing face
And neck fire-rosy too abruptly when
She startling turned as men came bearing him.

Glimpses he caught of her performing well
Meekly her lowly services of home;
And while he lay luxuriously weak,
With casement open, gloating in the light
Of summer evening sumptuous and large,
Inhaling balmy blossom-breathing air,
Music of sunny leaves, horizons fair,
Not seldom shyly would she falter nigh:
'For mother being very busy craves
'You will excuse her sending, sir, by me
'Your lemonade, and here are some fresh flowers

'From our wee garden I have culled for you.'
But after slow retrieving forfeit health
At evening he would join the family,
Partaking of the homely meal with them,
Listing the sire's not unmelodious flute
After his labour of the day afield—
Relating travellers' experience
To them entrancing, novel, wonderful,
Mayhap in passing lightly naming names
The common wind of rumour blows abroad,
At which the sire or mother in amaze
Would question if himself had even seen
Or spoken to the mighty folk he named,
Welcoming an affirmative with awe.
But aye at culmination of the tale,
Whate'er the story, would the teller's eye
Stealthily visit one who sat apart
On yonder wooden settle in the nook,
Modestly knitting, with a look demure
Low-drooped upon the wool, surprising her
More than once leaning forward looking full
Upon him with sweet marvel in her eyes
And little open mouth and listless hands,
Blushing to meet his gaze at unaware,
Catching confusedly the falling wool;
And then to bed, to magical fair dreams
Of brilliant lords and ladies, of rare scenes
Romantic, and the teller of the tales.

For him, he went to ponder if the look
Held only marvel, that and nothing more!
But it was after hesitating long,
Vowing to leave her in the sheltered nest
And, going, hide his bleeding heart from her,
Giddy and sick, foreboding a farewell,
Jealous of moments shutting them apart,
He made resolve to ask her for her love,
To pray that she would bless his lonely life.
With tremulous hope he sued—a moment more
And she coy yielding lay upon his heart.

Vain jangled clapper-tongues of friends inane
That he was noble, lowly born the girl;
Was she not born for him and he for her?
In salient life-crises like to this,
With heart and mind at one, their impetus
Bore him to action strong, unwavering.
In Italy they spent the primal days;
After, he brought her to a cottage home
Where in calm lapse the sweet months glided by.
Now the word Happiness broke on his soul
Like a new revelation; empty wind
The mouthèd phrase had been to him before;
Yet though his spirit fondled her young joy
She fondled it too like some timorous hare
Who fondly licks her furred young in the grass,
Yet with one ear pricked ever and anon,

Lest yon faint rustle in the neighbour copse
Be stealthy weasel treading last year's leaves.
With staff in hand and girded loins he feeds
Restlessly in a posture of defence;
And yet those years were heaven for all the note
Of wanton, half-luxurious, boding mazed
With their calm joy, only enhancing it
By discord gentle, tinging every thought,
Concentrating the soul upon her love
As transient and fleeting like the flush
Of sunrise. Ah! 'twas sweet in those bright days
For them to sit, the lovers, hand in hand,
He like the breath of spring to her gum-bud
Of sprouting mind, teaching her many things,
And opening her sweet being at his will,
To blow a flower of rarest scent for all!
These are a few songs fragrant with his bliss
That floated from him on the summer air.

IN HAVEN

No more shrill whistling 'mid the spars;
No black masts reeling 'mong the stars
Point to them as they go and come,
We labouring o'er the waste of foam.

I waken to a glorious dawn,
Calm floating through unruffled morn
In a sweet breathing wooded bay
Upon a rosy sea of day.

'Tis no ideal vision we raise
In Fancy's faëry coloured blaze;
Nor faint flame kindled as we breathe
On ashes of the Past in death.

Though men aver but spirit gleam
Of Hope and Memory may redeem
Life's pain and life's monotony,
We taste joy's essence ere we die!

Your mind's high vision may be rare,
Your soul's dreamed mistress passing fair;
Yet, brothers, are they something pale:
Perchance those simple girl-flowers that veil

Their fragrant loveliness in shade
Of taller growths from careless tread
And skyward gazers might unfold
A life of *God's* ideal mould—

Fresh from his hand in bounty sown
On this our earth: life sacred own;
Its mysteries; and most its love:
We witness, darling, as we prove!

HOME

Oft riding o'er a gentle rise,
  I pause the landscape to survey,
While frosty dews to half-shut eyes
  Weave webs of light in jewel play:
    A floating gleam
    Of elfin beam
In hoar grasstufts where the gossamers dream.

Tall trees with bronzy budded sprays
  Embroider fine the liquid blue;
Whose shadows stream to softer maze
  As brimming o'er and sinking through
    The sunned champaign,
    Kine-gleaming plain,
Fields, hamlets, woods, in vaporous wane.

Yon hollow lies of all most fair:
  A languid wreath of lawny smoke
Luxuriates in lucid air
  O'er clustered elm, the haunt of rook,
    From nestled farm
    Homelike and warm
Aloof from men and all their harm.

For there at household tasks my life
  Moves singing blithe as any bird
With whose brown nests our eaves are rife
  That in the fresh May-dawn is stirred—
    Dawns which illume
    Those folds of spume
That curtain frail our beamy room.

We hear yon thresher's measured beat,
  We see the glancing of the flail,
Farm voices cheery rousing greet,
  Each milkmaid bears her bubbling pail.
    Soon where we sleep
    Your rose will creep,
And early will your flowers peep.

Joy's essence, all my spirit prays,
  I hold though I believed it not:
So life's long dark bewildering ways
  Sloped down toward this primrose spot!

Spill, leaves unrolled!
Our petals fold
Pressed close upon their heart of gold!

Is this the whole? to seek our joy,
And finding sink to mere content—
No social aims our powers employ,
In a boundless human firmament?
Nay in a well,
Both deep and still,
Hoard love that all may drink their fill!

All bliss, how pure so e'er, must die,
For this untasted must I throw
My life in dust? for shadows sigh?
Nay, drain its brief yet generous flow!
Love makes us more
With all the store
Of other lives, sole conqueror!

If aught survive it should be love,
That blends us with the heart of things;
But if in death no spirit move,
Alone life's subtle aroma springs
From delicate cells
Where love indwells:
Ah! guard it from the winter spells!

For calmly sleep our azure seas:
And yet from far there seems to breathe
Anon as warning some chill breeze
From wandering iceberg, white with death—
The dull world's ill,
Chance frosts which kill,
And worst, my own dark spirit's chill!

Fold close, more close, the present bliss:
You gaze abroad—behold, 'tis gone;
Nay, thoughts ne'er wander even to this—
Bask in the glory, every one!
Nor wonder pale
How soon the trail
Of yon vast shade shall make it fail!

As when upon a summer day
We wandering down some woodland vale
Hear a sweet voice from far away
So clear, so sweet, our spirits fail
To tell its birth,
Of heaven or earth,
Dropt by some angel in his mirth,

Who dips these crystal days anear
Such seems our love: O thrilling voice,
Intent I lean; I stand all ear;
Hand raised to banish alien noise;
My souls drinks in
Bliss-shimmering keen
Each quavering line of your music rain!

Die not, O voice, into the blue
You well from: scent of blossomed spring
On delicate airs, I faint with you:
Slide not from their too wanton wing!
Kind spirits, alight;
With hands flushed white
Shade my one flame from breath of night.

THE DESTROYER

Our clasp too firm for aught to sever,
I swore to hold thee, love, for ever,
Last height of all my life's endeavour!

A child may laughing homeward run,
With snow-wreath frail hands closed upon,
But opening them he finds it gone!

I press thee close, I feel thine hand;
My spirit can, nor will, command
A thought that in this lovelit land,

Within the heart of ferns and flowers,
That mantle round these feet of ours,
A subtle exhalation cowers,

To breathe unseen a fatal breath,
And sure, though slowly, to unwreathe
Locked hands that would not loose till death.

Yet lurks miasma in the air,
However seeming pure and fair,
For tainted spirits everywhere.

And we, foam-globes the sunlight strews
With iridescent moment hues,
While to the flood new strength accrues!

My child, must our sweet love go by?
We foambeads fleeting, you and I?
Ah! turn we now with tearful eye

To that Divine Man who alone
Stream taintless from the spring hath flown,
Who feels the Father's will his own;

And so his name as Saviour gave,
In teaching faith and love shall save
And bloom their full beyond the grave!

For long our holiday extends,"
It seems when first we visit friends
Beloved, but all too soon it ends!

So brief the life of holiest mirth
For what to us this teeming earth,
If love's cold ashes choke the hearth?

And since 'tis gloaming infinite
All round our solitary light,
What end would thy desire invite?

—That when the shadows nearer press
From forth the outer loneliness—
If they could make love's watchfire less,

Till we numb cowering, even we!
Half-vacant note the encroaching grey
On those red brands—it ne'er can be!

Or as we two love's vigil keep,
If unaware night's fingers creep
About *one* heart to still its leap—

We leaning close might nestle so
O'er *both* the numbing night must flow:
And so the last each soul shall know

Will be the sister spirit nigh,
What last swims near each filming eye
The one dear face—and so to die!

Then if below the ghostly rim
There lives a day that grows not dim,
We trample on the boast of Time!

If one had stayed, that friendly art
Accurst might soothe and heal—and part—
But now we go locked heart to heart!

Ah, rave not, poor blind human pride!
For is not Love Divine the guide?
Come, let us kneel then side by side!

EVENING PRAYER

I

Now the soft warm gleam uncertain
  In the little chamber stays,
On the spotless falling curtain,
  By the bedside where she prays:
From the shadow round her kneeling
Slender hands are raised appealing.

II

Down below the shadow resteth,
  O'er blush-alabaster feet,
Simple robe of white investeth
  Up to where bows, childlike sweet,
Gentle head in hands half hidden,
Whence the shadow falls forbidden.

III

From our dusk her hands are lifting,
And the light, in answer bland,
Down her sleek brown tresses drifting,
Seems to smooth them with a hand—
Solemn hand from forth the splendour,
Where this child hath those that tend her!

IV

These love-tears may cloud my vision;
Yet about this humble room
Do not faces dim, Elysian,
Yearn down o'er her through the gloom?
Even the shades are glory colder,
Warming softer as they fold her!

V

So bathe her feet our earth's chill sorrow,
Never cling more dark than this;
From her gentle spirit borrow
Even the hues and warmth of bliss,
While her soul inhales the heaven,
Praying thus at morn and even!

VI

Her, life's darkling pilgrim haileth;
Mountain forest, haunted nook,
As on high serene she saileth,
Smile beneath her sainted look!
Only worldlings, foul in feeling,
Curse the childlike light revealing.

VII

Spirit music, souls of flowers,
  Here luxuriate to shape,
Charming far the baleful powers:
  Blessed moment, wherefore 'scape?
Hold her young, so griefless praying,
Hold these trancèd eyes from straying!

Book II

Clement and Beatrice had often planned,
If circumstance should ever set them free,
That they would seek a dwelling in the south
Where childish years of each had danced away,
Two drops that sparkle waxing side by side,
Unwitting they shall tremble into one.
And now the very nook that they had found,
Seeking sweet solitude wherein to nurse
Their new-born joy in crescent honeymoon,
They seek again, a vain experiment
Too oft—for either we ourselves have changed,
Ourselves most mutable of mortal things,
Or memory's cherished home looks alien.
But Beatrice and Clement loved as then,
And that fair nook seemed waiting their return.

Whitely it gleamed as in a verdure-nest,

Their villa, with its vases aloe-crowned
And shutters green to keep it cool within,
'Mid oranges and lemon-trees that crowd
Here by the margin of the dark blue sea,
A gem within a bloomy fold of hills
Where they with silver fringe the azure wave.
So Clement saw it from the castled rock
Where homeward faring reined he in the steed
For eyes athirst in peace to drink the view;
For here the little villa first appears
To one who journeys westward by the coast,
Even as did Clement, called into the north
To England now three moons and more ago,
While circumstance forbade that Beatrice
Should follow him but forced her to remain.
He having suffered in the interval
Much pain and much perplexity in mind
Full wearily returned, desiring her
Whose presence on his troubled heart should fall
As fanning air upon a burning brow.

No path, I think, in all fair Italy
Is lovelier than the path that led him here,
Meandering through olives old and huge
Oaklike in girth, of gnarlèd cavern-bole
And hoary leaves, varied with ilexes,
Carûb of glossy leaf, and iris flower
That seems to fleck with colour from the sea

These mountain-groves—how often climbing high
Up yon grey rock beneath an olive's shade
By some clear rivulet those lovers lay,
And peered for hours into the flickering blue
That starlike winked among the leaves; or leaning
Upon their elbows, vague athwart the sea
(Soft salvia-blue immersed in hazy light)
Dream-gazing, lay upon the mountain-thyme
And rosemary and mint that scent soft airs
Around them, soothed with humming of the bee,
Sipping cool oranges luxurious,
With all their past spread indistinct behind,
The sad and happy in the lives of each,
The rough ways and the smooth ways in their lives,
Like some far landscape from a pleasant height,
All lovely in the summer light of love!
Or else he read to her the glowing strain
Of Petrarch: they were rapt into the heavens,
Whirled panting in the awful seraph flight
Of Dante to the feet of Beatrice,
Or solemn thrilled at his lament for her—
But oft some kindred feeling in the tale
Disturbed the eyes of each, fusing their beams
In one another's fervid labyrinths,
Then like to those whose love that poet sings
How tenderly! 'that day they read no more.'

On this runs Clement's thought in riding slow

Through those old olives winding low anon
Where cornflag flushes all the vivid grass
With purple-pink, and oranges like lamps
Light all the groves, while through slim almond leaves
And figs and planes the ripple of the sea
Soft lightens momently at every plash
Of dozing undulations as they wake.
Then down upon a little open bight
Of shining shingle fringeing a ravine,
Lit by a mountain streamlet mantled o'er
Of maidenhair and limber leaves and flowers,
Wends devious the path, and circles now
An open headland whence the rock appears,
Beyond the bay, of castled Monaco.
A peasant here the happy rider met
Driving his donkey with a cask of wine
Slung either side, a dull red stain about
Its mouth and cork: the sunburnt stalwart man
With raven hair, dark eyes, and olive skin,
One of the ancient race Ligurian,
Was wont to greet him very cheerily;
For he was one of those the lovers twain
In evenings cool before their frugal meal
Would visit often in the humble homes,
Finding true friends among these peasant-folk,
While ministering to them in their need.
But Clement fancied, after pleased surprise
The man had manifested as they met,

His face had strangely clouded, and a ruth
Made soft his eyes and saddened in his voice.
He wondered for a while, yet little heeding
Skirted the bay and, singing to himself
When none were nigh, he pictured the beloved
So near him now, the dress that she may wear,
Most like of muslin blue and white—this hour
She may be in the garden with her book
Or at her evening meal on rustic table
Beneath cool umbrage of two limber planes,
As far from the blue sea as in a wood
A startled bird may flit from twig to twig.
'Here may she gaze athwart the infinite
'To where blue sky and ocean marrying blend,
'As I have seen, with eyes more infinite
'Mysterious than they, while shadowy hands
'Glide from the foliage over her to stroke
'Her grace of soft brown hair how daintily,
'And her soft shoulders gleaming through the gauze,
'Or envious invade the basking glow
'On gentle undulation of a breast
'Tender as petals of an opening rose.
'But yet I think she listens anxiously
'For a far tramp of horse; my letter told
'That many days ago I should be here:
'Maybe she fears mishap and pines for me,
'My own soul's life—a minute only, love,
'And you lie folded to my beating heart!

'And then what bliss our parchèd eyes shall draw
'And draw and draw from one another's wells,
'Until we leave them for the dewy mouth
'And suck it thence and never speak the while,
'Unless with utterance broken rare and low!'

But as he nears the house, he notices
With wonder that the shutters green are closed
Both in the upper and the lower rooms,
Though 'tis near sunset, and in afternoons
This eastern-facing side is shadowy cool:
And Beatrice neglects not homely care
For ordering details of daily life
Which smooth and make it pleasant unaware.
But coming to the garden-wall he thinks
She may have heard his horse and meet him there;
Yet is there no one—riding through the gate
His eye explores dim spaces 'mid the trees,
And peering to the spot between the planes,
As he had visioned her, it seems that she
Is sitting there indeed with look intent
Upon the sunset flush in sea and sky.
His heart leaps up, he calls her name aloud;
Then rising slow she turns to him, her face
Looks wan when he discerns it nearing her,
For all the evening flush, and wistful eyes
Suffused and sorrowful are hers, with arms
Stretched eager open to him, while her lips

Move white and tremulous with ne'er a sound,
Until a fig-tree baulks him of the sight.
He with a sudden faintness at his heart
Bounds past the trees and flings him to the ground,
But finds her not, and leaving loose the horse
Plunges among thick figleaves seeking her.
In vain—he finds no traces of her nigh;
So he emerges calling anxiously
And peering everywhere; no Beatrice!
Then stands bewildered; she was here but now;
It could be no illusion of the sense!
Some ghastly dread has whispered in his ear,
And pale mechanical he draws the steed
(So quiet cropping dim delicious grass)
Toward the house, till with alacrity
A groom appears, and bowing to his lord,
That selfsame look of pity on his face,
The peasant wore, arrests the eager words
On Clement's questioning lips and keeps him mute.
With mute interrogation in his eyes
A moment, straight he hurries to the house,
And fumbles at the door as he were blind,
Enters the room where she is wont to sit
To find it empty, rapid mounts the stair
To their own chamber—yet she may be nigh,
Strolling this evening not expecting him!
The little things that ever speak of her
Unto his heart are there; the needlework

The thimble and the workbox are below,
A tiny stocking knitted by her hand
For some poor neighbour's babe, the needle in it,
Half-finished on the table, and her book
Open at yon window flutters in the air.
While yet he strove to reason foreboding down
Too vainly, stole her favorite maiden nigh,
And she was weeping, weeping bitterly.
Then Clement sickened; faltering 'Where is she?'
But she wept on, till hoarsely 'Tell me quick!'
He whispered; so she glanced at him and sobbed,
As she beheld his ghastly waning face,
'She is not dead: oh no, she is alive!'
At this the blood congesting at his heart
Flowed free again—'he carried her away.'
'Who? what? who carried her away? explain!'
But choked with tears and he so vehement
She could not utter more.

And now a touch,
Such a soft touch, upon his shoulder grows.
He turns and with displeased astonishment
Beholds a dame he knows alas! too well.
Some sorrow looks from her fair countenance,
And some affection tenderness for him.
Yet Clement at the sight of her and touch
Felt as might feel a wild-bird darting glad
Unto his home, and peering through the dusk

Of brushwood for the downy streakèd head
Of his soft mate upon the lichened edge
Of their hidden nest and watching on their eggs,
As such a bird might feel beholding there
A smooth gorged serpent coiling in her stead.
'Do *you* know, madam, anything of this?'
He questioned; she 'Believe my sympathy
'How deep for you; be only calm, and I
'Will tell you all I know of what has chanced.'
She motioned him into a chamber near,
He following like some automaton.
'You wonder I am here—not long ago
'I came alone, and she invited me
'As friend of yours to spend much pleasant time
'Here in her company, and often I
'Returned her courtesy and asked her home.
'It chanced a traveller whom I had known
'In former days, was passing in a yacht,
'And came ashore; we met him in our walks—
'Ah! had I known the man's true character—
'A fascinating man the women think,
'Noble and wealthy; often afterward
'He went to her—I never thought of fear:
'She often said she longed for your return,
'And wondered at your silence every day.
'How full she relished her converse with him
'I well could see, yet never till by chance
'(Now you must nerve yourself to hear the whole)

'I came one day she did not look for me
'Did I suspect the terrible fatal truth;
'But then I saw them sitting side by side,
'And in his toying hand hers passive lying.'
With this the lady's radiant lissome hand
Slid into his and pressed it as for ruth,
And her wild hungry eye stole seeking his;
But he, as if the contact blistered him
Like vitriol, snatched violent his hand,
And rising suddenly confronted her
Black as a storm with loathing and with scorn,
And hissed the syllables 'You know you lie!'
She cowering collapsing in dismay,
Died all the languid longing in her eyes
That filled with baleful greenish livid light
As cats' in darkness, and the pleasant lines
Of her faint-smiling mouth set rigidly
About the close thin lips, while fingers clutched
Clawlike her seat, until she seemed a lynx
That draws itself together for a spring.
'Maybe you'll ask your servants if I lie,'
After a pause half-audibly she breathed.
'My servants! ask my servants if the sun
'Did tumble in my absence from the sky!
'Lady, I know you—and I know my wife.
'You may have loved me as 'tis given to such
'As you to love: I knew you not of yore.
'You loved; yet not like young romantic girls,

'Yourself confessed, but with sobriety
'You poised your love against i'the other scale
'A higher title, ampler wealth and power,
'Carriage and footmen, richer jewellery,
'As 'tis the wont of women in the world,
'And even though weighted with my rank and blood,
'Your poor light love flew upward with a jerk!
'Inevitably such a flimsy thing
'Must waver here and there with every gust
'And every fetid vapour of the sense.
'But she—I pray you mark the difference!—
'She was, you know, "a young romantic girl,"
'Her love was love, no flimsy counterfeit,
'Base spawn of wanton fancy, vanity,
'But love—the power you creatures of the world
'Are doomed to mock and never comprehend.
'With her, the wealth of continents and seas,
'The social pinnacle, a monarch's throne,
'Were but an airy cobweb in the scale
'To wrench the almighty magnet-hold of love!
'It cannot be: I know my Beatrice.'
So then the lady, livid with her rage,
Sidled from near him rising to her feet,
And spake with choking accents low and thick:
'A most sublime tirade, I thank you for it
'And for your good opinion; as for her,
'I only know this model saint of yours,
'This poet's ideal of love and constancy,

'This faithful though insipid peasant-girl,
'Has left you—left you—for a vicious duke.
'I saw them—saw them—row away myself,
'And your sweet paragon was in his arms!'
With that she broke into hysteric cries,
Half choking sobs and half hyena laugh,
For bitter jealousy, and vanity
And lacerated love turned into gall;
But at the last word when she mentioned *him*,
The man who stole his Beatrice away,
The pitiless sneer that Clement wore for her
In her unlovely disappointed mood
Passed into a concentrate look of hate
Slow-fed with blackness like a thundercloud,
And though he glowered into her very eyes,
No more his vision pictured facing him
The woman fair with passion hideous.
Anon he muttered talking with himself,
'When in the life-blood of his quivering heart
'These hands have revelled, I shall die content.'
Whether the lady fainted on the floor,
Or at her leisure smoothed her ruffled plumes,
He never knew, for turning on his heel,
Abrupt he left her, striding through the hall
Into the garden, up the rock, away.

Onward he strode and chose the steepest parts
Of the abrupt gray rock, as driven aloft

By the fierce tumult of his boiling blood.
He ever chose the giddiest mountain-tracks,
Haunt of shy marmot and of ibex wild,
That he with soul unquailing might surprise
The secret of soliloquies sublime
Nature, the ancient mother, murmurs far
From human presences in craggy haunt
Of cormorant and eagle, by lone springs
Of mighty rivers bubbling into light.
Now the tumultuous anguish of his soul
Urged him instinctively to drown its roar
By conjuring a counter-tempest forth,
Born of unwonted effort physical.

In part his purpose was to find a friend
Who dwelt upon the rock, a peasant he,
Intelligent and cultured; not a man
Born in the country, but a mountaineer
From Corsica, who left his native hills
Craving adventurous to see the world,
Embarked a sailor lad from Genoa,
And after many years the crew discharged,
Wandered along the coast to Monaco;
And here, for all proud sniffing of the air
Of independence, he was brought to bay
By large dark eyes, and clearest olive skin,
By a neat cotton print tied round the chin,
Blue woollen stocking covering ancles trim.

The father of the girl, an only child,
Owned a small cottage and a strip of rock
Which his forefathers with their strong right arms
Had scooped and terraced, digging spacious tanks
For irrigation through the summer drought,
Then planted with the delicate lemon-tree.
Aloft they lived, but he would do at times
Some sardine fishing in the breezy dawn
With his own boat, for oft he wistful eyed
His old well-loved free perilous salt sea.
Now a full year his darling child lay ill,
The stay of his old age, a maiden sweet,
Whose mother he had buried many years,
And when nor Beatrice nor Clement came
Their way, the father would himself descend
To carry wine and strengthening food for her
The maiden sick; till he and Clement grew
Fast friends, and roamed the hills in company
Searching for plants and holding high converse.
To this old man (whose name was Paoli),
Instinctive Clement turned, for since he went
(As Beatrice related when she wrote)
Down daily to the villa, he would know
Something of this dark horror that had chanced.
And then he craved some sterling sympathy;
And yet the track he chose led far away
From the old man's home into the solitudes,
For solitude he needed most of all.

At length exhausted prone he flung himself
Upon a ledge above a precipice,
Sinking among sweet thyme and rosemary,
And ling half russet girt with myrtle bushes
And lentisk, while the overhung, grey rock
That seemed to swoon and fall through azure air
Was festooned with a succulent-leaved plant
That bore bright crimson cactus-like wee flowers.
This and the spurgewort, and the velvet bees
Backing from out the bulging fox-glove bells
And shaggy goat that clung with sharp-cleft hoof
Of close-set nervous legs to naked crag,
All this he saw and noted in his mind,
When his breath came and when the tide of blood
Less violently thumped within his head—
Saw too the wine-empurpled promontories
Dim set in ocean hued like flower petals
Where azure melts to purple unaware,
And grape-bloomed gorges of the folding hills;
While nor near cricket nor the croaking frog
From distant tank could vex the stilly eve.
Yet though he saw, yea, noted in his mind,
The formless ghastly trouble writhed within,
And rustled in dusk corners of his heart;
Anon awakened, and emerging slow
With hideous lineaments confronted him.
Stunned, sickened for a moment, wildered thoughts
Came trooping to their banner at his call—

To find her—rescue—that immediately,
This very night, without a thought of rest,
And to inflict a righteous punishment
On him who dared insult the sacred shrine
Where his soul worships and his life keeps guard—
Light deepens round that purpose prominent.

Now as he nears the cottage of his friend,
The old man sitting on a low stuccoed wall,
Whence rise white pillars trellised at the top
And roofed with vine-leaf, at his cottage door
Espies him coming; to the vine-walk's end
Straight walks to meet him, and approaching nigh
Puts out two hands, and Clement's hand in his
Clasps tight with such a look upon his face,
Clement beholding need not ask 'You know?'
With wan lips nervous twitching, for he sees
The kind old man knows all; mechanical
He speaks the words to set emotion free
Whose flood in silence overwhelmingly
Boils up and strains the flood-gates of the heart.
'Yes, I know all,' deep tremulous tones reply,
As if the old sailor were the father himself
Clement had alienated by his love.
Firm-lined and clean-cut are the features grand
Of that old man, with venerable grey hair
Beneath the pouch red woollen that he wears
Like other peasants; but he looks a rock

Of granite lofty and majestic reared,
That fronts through all the years with countenance
Calm equable irradiation deep
Of zenith-blue intense full-saturate
With undiluted sun-light smiles of God;
Anon the smother of his thunder-cloud,
Scathe of his lightning, lashing of his rain,
Hounded of that wild huntsman the shrill wind,
Blister of frost and rasping of keen ice:
A countenance calm, equable, yet scarred
And weatherstained with rough experience.
But kindliness, a mellow charity,
Beamed from the window of his clear grey eye:
Life had not petrified or curdled sour
The sweet and gracious juices of his breast.
Unturned the fine edge of his inner sense,
Widening experience of human spirits,
And of his own, responsive to the play
Of varied circumstance, his views of men
Rendered elastic, large, and pitiful.
The ennobling humanizing influences
Of that sublime creed he was nurtured in
His soul assimilated, little harmed
Of elements that puff rank bigotry.
'Mayhap,' he spake, ''twill be more pleasant here
'Sitting without than in my darksome hut.
'Are you fresh come, or know you all that passed?'
But Clement, about whose heart the casing ice

Was thawing in the rays of sympathy,
Could scarcely utter—covering his face
He strove to choke down not unmanly tears.
The old man's eyes were swimming too with mist,
But the youth faltered how but now arrived
He knew the bare fact only, seeking here
For detail deeming that his friend might know.
This foreign duke cast anchor, Paoli told,
With a large yacht about a month ago
Early one placid morning near the shore:
The lady fine new-settled in a villa
And he appeared inseparable friends.
'He was a scoundrel with a narrow brain
'Who held himself quite irresistible;
'Among the women whom he herded with
'Mayhap had proved it so; in higher types
'Of woman disbelieved, but he had spoken
'(Her maid, a faithful creature, told me this)
'Had looked and spoken as ill became a man
'With a pure child who scarce believed in wrong.
'From then her mistress vaguely dreaded him;
'Yet when he asked both ladies to the yacht,
'She, nothing doubting since her feigning friend
'Would go with her, consented freely, glad
'To see a ship all praised as beautiful.
'But when next morning the duke came ashore,
'The woman came not—never meant to come—
'To meet her as was settled on the strand.

'The traitor urged her waiting 'neath the shade
'Of the boat's awning, for the sun was fierce;
'And in a moment at a sign from him
'(So a mate told me) they had shoved the boat
'Off from the shingle, and he heard her call
'Loud but in vain for them to wait her friend;
'None answering, the villain took his seat
'Close at her side and strove to seize her hand,
'She edging off and crying to return.
'The yacht weighed anchor, and a stiff nor'-wester
'Scarce felt in here, but fresh away from land,
'Sped her that evening far toward Corsica.'—

'In Corsica? is that where I must go?'
Clement broke in with husky tone abrupt,
Clutching the word as lying in ambush for it.
—'In Corsica,' old Paoli resumed,
'This man—a Frenchman—owns a castle vast.
'There from the gossip of his crew I gather
'He must have taken her—this only chanced
'Four days ago—I deem the woman far
'More guilty than the man in this affair,
'The friend professed—I know not if I err.
'But for her motive, that I cannot guess.'
'Him I can deal with,' Clement answered slow,
'How with a woman? she preferred the gold
'To me, but deemed that she could have me too
'On her own terms and when the fancy came.

'She thought me weak and plastic in her hands,
'Docile to take the shape her lust might crave,
'No more rebellious to her fingers lithe
'Than would be ductile clay that she might mould.
'So she had found men, so appraisèd me
'From superficial signs ambiguous,
'Nor guessed the human clay she paddled in
'Yielded because itself found yielding sweet;
'But let her twist the tame lump otherwise,
'As if a blade lurked hidden in the mass,
''Twould cut her wanton fingers to the bone.
'I deemed sweet daily suns and tender showers
'And many dewy moons of intercourse
'Had mellowed juiciest friendship-fruits in her,
'But lo! on peering through the lavish leaves
'The fruit showed green and acrid as at first!
'She told me her deliberate thought of me,
'And it was shallow and ungenerous.
'But she inspired, I deem, her precious friend
'With her own erring estimate of me—
'The worse for his facile credulity!
'She could not fancy I could ever love
'Any but her—once looking in her face—
''Twas pique that drove me to another's arms!
'Let her appear and beckon me away,
'Let her but hint the other unworthy me,
'And I should drop at her least finger-brush,
'Drop eager in her lap, how cheaply won!

'What punishment could I devise for her,
'A woman? I could never hurt a woman
'Weak in her flesh—not even if my love
'Were false to me—she must be left alone
'With her own meaner choice and with her shame.
'This one I leave to her own scorpion tail
'Of vanity turned inward on herself,
'Cramped in her own small soul for evermore—
'That's punishment enough, methinks, for her—
'But not for him, a man can deal with man.'

'What can you do? what would you do?' replied
Paoli gravely, 'think of saving *her*;
'And you may save her, win her back to you
'Ere thrice again yon sinking sun hath set
'To lie upon your heart, and I can help!'—
'Yes, tell me, now at once I start to snatch
'My all from him and stretch him 'neath her feet,
'His place—his own—whence he has dared to stir
'With heart profane, for I was out of sight,
'The coward; since he would not stoop for awe
'Justice cries out that he must grovel dead!'—
'Nay, calm yourself, belovèd friend of mine,'
Answered the old man, 'leave him to our God
'The sole avenger—for what gain were yours
'In this man's death? What more should you desire
'Than her salvation? She awaits you now
'And longs for her deliverer: what gain

'To her or you the slaying of the man?
'So you would only with infatuate hand
'Stretch dead for ever your reviving joy
'Even at the wondrous moment it emerged
'Scarce hoped-for from the shadow of the tomb.
'Blood would be on your consciences if law
'Hunted you not nor ran you down at last:
'If you must punish there are courts of law;
'Cite there the man as public enemy.'

'Prate not of law, my friend,' replied the youth,
'To me on fire with my most righteous hate,
'Who nothing am if not one parching thirst
'For one heart's blood—not injury to *me*,
'But her whom God committed unto me,
'His dearest, tenderest, loveliest child among
'The children likest nearest to Himself,
'Her wrong in thunder-tones God bids avenge;
'And if I shrink, how clear myself to Him?
'It is her cause, not mine, it is the cause
'Of God her Father: in your holy books
'Where do you read 'tis sinful to avenge
'A lamb that Heaven has laid upon your breast,
'Lent you awhile and trusted to your care?
'Nay, doth not Christ affirm who toucheth these
'Toucheth the very apple of God's eye?
'Avengers are the ministers of God!
'Let them but merge their puny selves and wrongs

'In that vocation awful and sublime,
'Strong will their stroke be, calm and terrible.
'Prate not of law to me—it is an age
'I know of reason and expediency,
'When dearest friends respectable and smooth
'Mine, countermine, beneath each others' feet,
'And sell their souls for shameful homage men
'Paid once to virtue, now to liveries;
'Age when a man is fool to trust his brother
'Yet dares not swindled clutch him by the throat,
'When if one should behold before his eyes
'A mother strangled or a wife abused,
'With judgment cool far-seeing he would stroll
'Enquiring where to find a magistrate!
'Unfearing now you may insult a man,
'Unfearing too you may insult his friend—
'The barbarous dark age of honour dead.
'How should men start and shudder now to hear
'Such names as liar, knave, applied to them,
'When they have nigh forgotten that knavery
'And lies are base and very loathsome things,
'How prudent and respectable soe'er
'And orthodox in creeds a man may be
'To keep well with society and God?
'Ah! dare we babbling foul the holy name
'Of Christ, the wise the world-embracing heart,
'And his forgiveness of his enemies?
'Dare we invest our native squalor with

'The fair word-raiment which of old He wore,
'And mimicking his accents and his gait
'Turn that divinest faith beneath the sun
'Into the byword of all honest men!'

And then he argued, as concerning fact,
That since the wrong was done in Italy
And Corsica was French, the traitor there
Was sheltered from the clutches of the law.
For his own safety, what was that to him?
Yet must he leave her in the world alone,
Nor taste again some hallowed life with her?
Two years were theirs, two years of paradise,
Envied of angels in the fadeless bowers,
And they are thankful for them and rejoice—
Yet who may sip the nectar-cup of gods,
Nor passionately long to sip again?
'Therefore my safety if I rescue her
'Is something to me—otherwise 'tis nought
'Less, less than nought!'

'Vengeance belongs to God,
'He will repay,' the other solemnly;
'But I will freely tell you what I know
'About your hope of safety where you go.
'Among my countrymen there yet prevails
'Alas! a sentiment much like to yours,
The which has borne a monstrous crimson fruit,

'Blood-feud (as such a seed must ever bear)
'Through ages, curse of my fair island home.
'That is a fire which smoulders even yet:
'Our rulers could not stamp the embers out.
'Your mission known the natives would assist
'And shield you to the utmost of their skill,
'Yet for success you need to know the spot
'And people of the place, and who can help.
'You take the steamer with the other folk
'In travelling thither; but my brother owns
'A tight felucca, and will lend it me
'If weather smile for our secret return.
'His home is in the town upon the coast
'Nearest the castle on the rock above.
'A year ago moreover in the house,
'Full trusted by the owner of it, lived
'My distant kinsman but my nearest friend.
'His incorruptible true-ringing heart
'Will in such enterprise be all our own
'If yet he dwell there; he can help within.'
'Then I may count on you,' Clement exclaimed,
Seizing the old man's hand impulsively.
'On one condition,' was the grave reply,
'Forego your wild scheme of revenge and think
'Only of saving her'—

'Impossible!
'I cannot do it—anything but this—

'Remember you are old and I am young.
'The traitor moved no hand against your love
'But against mine—if you were in my place!
'A boor with human nature if his king
'Have fouled it wanton, spat i' the face of it,
'His loyalty engrained like hair aflame
'Shrivels to thin air suddenly, and he
'Yields his left cheek most meekly, his mere life,
'Up unto him who smote him on the right,
'The cheek of honour, trod on her he loves,
'Meek yields his all—if only—mark the if!
'The chance be granted him to plunge and twist
'To agitate the blade in that false heart
'And lap its warm blood oozing to the haft.
'And I am not a boor—my blood more rich
'And ancient than yon duke's for all his gold,
'Got foully as I think, and puff-ball title
'His sire crawled all his life about the dust
'Of a king's ante-room between the legs
'Of courtiers, a live footstool for the king,
'To wheedle from him, a mere fellowman!
'The blood of monarchs and of nobles mine
'Who led the advancing vanguard of their time,
'A noble myself, nor without hope to grave
'My old ancestral name upon the age
'With thought of rarer temper than the wont.
'But since my peers are fallen with other folk
'Upon their face before the golden god

'Set with acclaim of nations and with clash
'Of all fair music in the world's high place—
'Set up for worship by the prince of it—
'And I alas! have scant rich offerings
'To offer like my equals to the god,
'Not even a daughter's heart, most dainty gift
'A parent can lay quivering at his feet,
'I walk apart in deep obscurity
'Confronting not the jeer of jingling fools.
'And me—for I am poor nor much frequent
'Their fashionable foolings, gatherings—
'This duke from them invades—for who am I?
'Not less by birth, yet weighed and wanting found
'I' the loaded scales of his society!
'What if he swoop upon a pauper's wife
'This gaudy jay—the woman should rejoice,
'Nor could the man complain; or doth the mate
'Of yon meek finch the ravenous kite hath mauled
'Complain, or will the gorging tyrant hear?
'And so he pounced upon my one ewe-lamb!
'She was my all, and I have nothing now;
'Nothing but my revenge; and yet you bid,
'Yet you bid me fling my revenge away!
'Is that your meaning? I would touch it firm;
'Can that indeed be what you ask of me?'

Then the old man: 'Now hear my final word.
'Promise at least, that if you find she lives

'You will not seek to kill the enemy.
'If he have left her life, you may not take
'His life away—or go you must alone.'
Clement reluctant promised, and his friend
Spake a few soothing solemn words to him
About the Sufferer of sufferers
That night He fell among the shadowy trees
Upon His face in bitter agony
Breathing 'Not My will, but Thine own be done!'

Then they embraced, and under a pale moon
The youth bent leaden steps toward his home.
And when he enters the familiar rooms
Almost he deems it but a hideous dream,
And that she quiet waits him in the house
Somewhere; he knows not where, but to and fro
Strays through each empty room, as looking for her
And listening for the gentle call he loves
From somewhere nigh, yet feeling it is vain.
Through dim moonspaces like to one half-stunned
Groping his way, the servants hearing steps
Unbidden bring him light and needed food,
And he shakes loose the stupor to arrange
The morrow's journey, and to order all
For his dependents as befits the case.
Last worn and weary flings him on a couch,
Yet cannot cease to picture his shy bird

Tiny and timorous, cowering in the glare
Of that foul serpent's hungry glittering eyes,
Wistfully craving him, but in despair
Sinking and waning deeming him afar,
And fearing he can never find her prison.
Then schemes of vengeance boil within his heart,
Fierce, incoherent, seething like a scum,
Yet chilled anon with some vague consciousness
That he, weak-healthed, a man of inner life,
(Not this alone, yet student in the main,)
Shrank secretly through all his ravaged frame
From striking that strong outward blow his soul
Roared to him as from myriad throats to strike.
Yet well he knows that he shall triumph here,
Once warmed with goad of some insulting word,
Or any opposition from the man.
His proud strong will shall guide the aspen hand
To deal as strong a blow as any clod.
But then the temperament too sensitive
Seeks, finds, ally in contemplative doubt.
So drift in sight again the arguments
Of the old peasant and his own replies,
Till over-strained into a fevered doze
He falls, the spirit racked and battling still,
A chamber full of loud discordant cries.

. . . . . .

They go as planned, and landing at the port
Of Bastia, they take a mountain path
Known well to Paoli along the coast,
That leads them to a village near the shore
Below the castle eyrie which they seek.
Blue as the bluest lapis-lazuli
The sea they skirt, plashing as musical
As yesterday along the Italian shore,
Listless alternating soft silences
With softer sound, as yonder bee anon
Muffles low hum in some campanula
Of nectared amethyst and hums again.
The hawk swims high in supple shining air,
And swallows twittering dart about the cliffs,
From the Marina with its little pier
Where loll the swarthy fishers gossiping
About the windlasses, or in the shade
Of stranded boats upon the furrowed beach
Mending their nets and munching chestnut cakes—
Opens a valley fair, and high therein
Perches the village on a shelf of rock,
Nested in olives; but the glen below
(A deep rich silt, plunder of flooding streams
From wealth of mountains in the winter, dammed
Their channel mouths unscoured of ebbing tides
By stormwaves piling sea-weed, shingle, sand)
Glows now with beaded mace-heads of the maize,
And simmers with a paler bearded wheat.

It is the summer calm when yesterday,
To-day, or any days we pair together,
Are fair twin sisters men distinguish not.
But yesterday the bosom of the youth
Mirrored serenely the serenity,
To-day it seems a hollow mask to him.

Paoli enquiring finds his sailor brother,
From whom he learns the foreigner indeed
Brought his sweet prize four suns and moons ago.
He promises a cheerful aid to them
Whate'er betide, relating that the friend
Staunch and leal-hearted Paoli had hoped
To find within the castle there in sooth
Yet dwells; the fisherman expects him here
Anon from Bastia, but yesterday
Thither despatched upon affairs the duke
Would trust to none beside reluctantly,
Since if the gossips be but well informed
The duke to him commits the special charge
Of his sweet captive, closest prisoner.
A charge assumed by Giudice that so
He might secure her safety in the den
Of the fell robber, choking down for her
The indignation of his faithful heart.
The master, who has squandered far in France
His graceless youth, trusts the integrity
Of that stern man his father trusted well,

Yet with the son integrity but means
A dog's devotion to the master's whim.
Till now his few behests indifferent
Giudice strictly taciturn fulfils.
'But he and I and all of us around
'Are Corsican, pure Corsican, and we
'Abhor such deeds: we love your countrymen,
'For they are freemen and have reached a hand
'To help us in our need; moreover he
'That dukeling yonder—(here he sunk his tone)
'Giudice was away then as I think—
'Seduced a girl, sister to one of us,
'To go with him to France and ruined her.
'So if you punish not your wrong, my lord,
'There are those here who wait to punish theirs.
'So many sluggish and cold-blooded years
'Of foreign rule have crawled not over us,
'Thank God Almighty, chilling our hot blood,
'But our faint pulse as at a clarion call
'Leaps yet remembering Fior di Spina—she,
'Our splendid maiden with the eyes of fire,
'Who in the public market-place of Corte
'With hand unfaltering flashed the fatal shot
'That brought her faithless lover to her feet,
'Tumbled him humbled to a lump of clay!
'O'er whom our poets trolled voceros brave,
'Whom mightiest most illustrious warriors crowned
'Their queen in chestnut-forests of our isle!'

So voluble and vehement outspoke
The Corsican with fiery face and eye,
And Clement knew that he could trust the man.
Scarce had he ended ere stern Giudice
Was in their midst and they the brothers twain
Apart conferring with him. He abrupt
A minute after turned to Clement saying
'I will assist you now immediately,
'The lady ails, do you but follow me.'
Well had he known remonstrating appeal
The libertine would but exasperate
To violence and maiming of the hand
That could alone assist the victim there,
And he was of the few, the very few,
Who if a breath would loosen an avalanche
On his own head, yet save another life,
Would palter not but breathe that breath and die.

No words are spoken winding through the grain
Or by the bleached stones of the torrent bed,
Then through the *maquis*, brushwood of arbute
Lentisk and myrtle, cytisus, rockroses
Cropped of rough goats or silken hornèd sheep,
Through olives and umbrageous chestnut-groves
Up the rock path, till near the castle loomed,
Portentous pile, squat like a monster toad
Irregular and huge upon its crest,
With rugged stones all blackened from the smoke

Of siege-fires in the turbulent past years,
And chipped of bullets with abortive aim
To silence shots from loopholes narrowing.
And Clement dare not ask the meaning full
Of that brief phrase 'she ails;' he only knows
She lives, or he would not be guided here.
But the guide pausing sharp addresses him,
'This morning with a party of his friends
'The duke goes shooting, has already gone.
'Now I will go before you to prepare
'The execution of our project, brief
'The time I need, and yet it will be best
'You should not burst too suddenly upon her.
'Therefore I take this track that leads direct,
'While leisurely you follow me by that
'Which makes a circuit; but observe the tower
'You must approach; she lies imprisoned there.
'A private staircase and a private door
'Lead from it facing seaward; I dismiss
'The Frenchman guarding it and I resume
'The key entrusted to my special care:
'A rockhewn staircase drops abruptly down,
'No window from the castle overlooks.'
Clement replied by wringing the strong hand
And by a look, then took the devious path
'Mong chestnut-trees and by a water-runnel,
Making a circuit, facing the stronghold
Anew when mounted on its proper ridge

A half mile to the rear of it; and here
A precipice fell sheer one side the path
With tumbled boulders at the base of it
O'ergrown of bramble and snapdragon flowers,
While a thin burn meandered under these,
Sparkling among the twinkling birch, anon
Quenched in the solemn shadow of the pines.

And now he heard a sound as of men's voices
Approaching, often breaking to a laugh.
Instinctively he drew into a hollow
Behind a lentisk thicket 'neath a rock
Jutting above the pathway where it curved,
Whence he beheld three men with rifles equipped
For shooting—they were Frenchmen by their dress
And by their talk; then Clement very pale,
Even quivering but with a dangerous
Gleam in his large dark eye, stepped forth and blocked
The way, and hoarsely spake, 'I want the duke.'
They started, but the midmost man replied
'I am the duke; your business, sir, with me?'
'A word in private if these gentlemen
'Will give me leave.' The Frenchman lifting cap
Requests his friends to saunter on before;
They passing turn the angle of the rock;
So lost to sight; the Frenchman visibly
Sallows through all his bloated sallow face,
A man with hard coarse mouth but half revealed

Through black mustachios tapering either end,
A parvenu whose fashionable hauteur
Is next of kin to vulgar insolence.
'Well, sir, I would be going, will you speak?'
'I think,' said Clement, 'there is little need.
'You know me and you know why I am here.'
The Frenchman sneered, 'I fear the man is mad.
'How should I know you?' 'Then, sir, I am he
'Whose humble abode you lately stooped to visit
'To rob me like a common skulking thief
'As it appears, for when my back was turned
'You stole my jewel—skulking off with it
'To this remote wild-beast lair. Where is she?
'What have you done with her? no paltering.'
'Be calm,' the man with livid lips replied,
Ill-feigning swagger of indifference.
'Remember whom you speak to—as for you,'
'Who may you be?' 'Fellow, my ancestors
'Were kings and earls when yours were keeping swine,
'Swinish like their own swine, and base like you!'
At those fierce words of Clement's with a cry
Of wrath the duke raised suddenly the rifle
Level with his shoulder; Clement folding arms
Confronted him: 'Night-thieves and murderers
'Are terms convertible, I am unarmed.'
Whereon the other lowering the rifle
Thrust it upon the bank. 'Well, name your time
'And place. I'll give you satisfaction full.'

'You call it satisfaction? I have heard.
'So stands it—me, a thinker, man of peace,
'Albeit noble, a bully like to you
'All unprovoked invades, insults my wife,
'Tramples my honour underneath his boot,
'Draggles it for the dregs of men to hoot,
'And when I call him to account invites
'Me to stand facing him for him to shoot.
'Large satisfaction to me for the wrong!
'Sir, you add insult to your injury!'
'If you're afraid,' the Frenchman sneered, 'I've done
'All in my power making you the offer.'
And then he added with malignant look,
More insolent since Clement had refused
The duel with him, 'now I think of it,
'The woman there whom you have come to seek—
'Surely my lady friend at Monaco
'Must have informed you that you do me wrong;
'I never forced her to come here with me;
'She freely came, needed no pressing, sir,
'Nay rather pressed herself upon me; so
'I think that even if you found her out
'(But this you shall not) at the castle there
'She would request you travel back again.'
So, foolish and unskilled in reading men,
Babbled the upstart brutal arrogant,
Misreading Clement like a traveller
Who though he see yet little heeds the cloud

Of massy indigo slow bellying
Half swallow-blue and half ash-wan until
A big drop startles and sharp lightning blinds
Him, leaping from its muffle unaware;
So the man failed to note or comprehend
The hate full filling that face of his foe
Confronting him while he insulted *her*,
Until outleapt like lightning forked the words
'You lie: defend yourself: prepare for hell!'
And rapid as the thunder on the heels
Of a flash near us crashes after it,
Followed the scathing syllables a blow
Clement dealt suddenly with all his force
On the man's chest, who reeled; but staggering
A pine-trunk saved him: then upon the brink
Of that abyss the two men grappled for life,
Swinging there to and fro both maniac
And blind with fury, their eyes lit from hell,
Jamming and knotting tense and burning limbs
Into one monstrous body like wild beasts
Whose demon maw torn free from one raw spot
But snaps again upon the nearest flesh
To burrow there with slakeless lust of death.

Both men were young and nearly matched for strength,
Though Clement was the slenderer: the duke
(Clement had forced him next the precipice)

Presently backward slipt—a treacherous tuft
That he had dinted with convulsive heel
Suddenly loosened from the very edge—
And both were toppling over, for the duke
Clutched Clement's arm and gripped it like a vice;
But Clement, throwing one arm about the trunk
Hard by, with one fierce effort flung the man
(Dangling, his forehead clammy with despair)
Free from him sliddering, who dug his nails
Into the rubble, a moment holding there:
Yet Clement demon-hearted wrenched a stone
Huge from its bedding, heaving it upon him;
Then shrilled a curse, alive with agony
Death's horror and the hatred of the damned
Writhing and sinking fangs in Clement's heart,
As the poor wretch let go and tumbled back
Over the crag inshelving with the stone,
Bounding from point to point until he thumped
A hideous quivering pulp upon the rock
In the ravine, crushing the meek wild flowers.
Clement watched, listened, breathing short and loud
Kneeling with his two hands upon the brink,
With a fiend's relish sucking sight and sound,
Following in spirit, ruthless thrusting him
From shelf to shelf, and dancing on him dead!

Sparkles yon burn set in the dusk ravine
With drowsy hum, the frail birch twinkle there,

The near pine sighs in gentle-washing air,
Oozing with odorous gum in wrinkled bark;
Butterflies flutter out on holiday,
Animate blue sky through the sunny blue;
Pink-pinks the chaffinch from soft-flickering leaves,
Green lizards glance among the sunbaked stones,
Or rest at gaze with shoulder on the stone
And half their shadow, whirrs the cockchafer,
Leaps the red cricket, flits the furry mouse
To his smooth-patted hole in yon lush bank;
The jetty beetle sprawls upon his back
Beading the lit speargrass with drops like blood:
Nature serenely takes the death-struggle
Of two mere men, serenely as she takes
Impaling of a sparrow by a shrike
On yon bronze thorn, gulp of gay dragon-fly
By darting swallow: nothing witnesses
In her suave aspect to the agony
Of her two human sons; except a blade
Here and there mangled on the very spot,
Club-moss elastic from their dinting freed
Upjerking now wee spore-capt stalks again,
Cyclamen soiled, half jammed into the ground
By the fierce feet that stamped and shuffled here—
This, and the corse that stains the snapdragon
Far yonder in the gloom of the ravine,
And he who silent glares upon it nigh
Kneeling, and leans upon two murdering hands.

Book III

Reaching the castle he finds the tower door
That Giudice had bidden seek with ease,
Opens it springing up a winding stair
With stones well worn and old, nor anyone
He meets—not Giudice—for Giudice
Encountering unforeboded obstacles
But now the Frenchman had decoyed afar,
Perforce accompanying him awhile;
So Beatrice knew nothing of the past.
A room-door stood ajar—some smothered sound
As of faint weeping fell upon his ear.
He paused—it was—it must be she—yet she
Surely expects him—how he longed to rush
And fold the form he thought that nevermore
He might enfold, and suck the poison out
Of her dear life with one long look of love
And one long kiss! yet hesitated he
Remembering the caution of his guide.
What shall he do? no sign of Giudice—
'He may be hindered: I have but to reach
'My hand to take her, she may slip from it;
'Some servitor may find his master dead.'
This risk the greater, so with beating heart
He shoves the massive iron-clamped door,

And stands upon the threshold—it is she!
At the embrasure of the narrow light
She standing leans upon the cold harsh stone,
Sun streaming on her neck and head, beyond
Gleaming upon the untasted sumptuous meal
Behind her served in milk-white porcelain,
And gloating on the crimson velvet pile—
From when he burst upon her in the spring
Of her young life (ah! not so long ago,
The same sun kindling the same wealth of curls)
How changed alas! grey cheeks in her thin hands,
Her eyes peer wistful on the sea, but dim
With unshed tears and hollows dark beneath.
Her face looks wan like latter primroses
That linger draggled with much dust and rain,
And all her listless form breathes hopelessness.
Ah! when we hear the faint pulsations fail
Of Hope the angel's wings upon the night,
Who parting from us turns his face to heaven,
Life stricken at heart soon falters after him.
Careless the ordering of her gracious hair,
Sleek-brown, and of her modest summer dress
Of muslin blue and white, the dress he loves,
Of old though simply faultlessly disposed.

She turns not at the creaking of the door,
Deeming 'tis but the servant, caring not
That snake-like maid should deem her spirit weak,

Until he makes a step—something in that
Turns her sharp round—a sudden light leaps up
Into her eyes, suffusing all her face.
'Clement!' she cries, a cry of ecstasy
Incredulous half with dazèd fear, mistrust;
She spreads her arms to fly to him, but pain
Shoots sharply through her; swims the scene around
Dizzy and dark; she tottering, he runs
To strain a lifeless body to his breast.
Then, sick at heart, he gently lays her down
Upon the bed, chafing the icy hands
And limbs, and breathes his breath between her lips,
In vain, until a step resounds below;
Giudice rushes in, but seeing them
Stops short, and snatches from a dark recess
A phial, which applied by him revives
Her from the deadly swoon, but after long.
And then he whispers that there wait beneath
Some trusty Corsicans who bear a litter
Disposed with cushions easy for the sick,
Since he had well foreseen that Beatrice
Was now too weak to travel otherwise.
'Only delay not or we may be lost.'
They carry her between them down the steps,
Tenderly laying her upon the couch
And sheltering with coverings freely lent.

Four men to bear her with a cautious tread

Among dense cork-trees, Clement close at hand
With soul divided, half in rapture glowing
To know her there, and half in anguish dipt,
Chill with foreboding which he shakes from him
In vain, for aye it settles on him again,
From seeing the fell ravage this brief time
Has wrought in her so tender, sensitive.
Her eyes are shut from feebleness, at peace
Her fevered spirit now to feel him there,
Opening anon and resting on his face,
Those large mild eyes, mazy as forest leaves,
Suffused with love-light mellower than day.
Anon she opens them to make it sure
It is no blissful fleeting dream she dreams,
But him indeed, and then the eyelids veined
Droop low again to prison the vision close
For lovesick soul to finger gloatingly.
Lest by exciting he may injure her
He speaks not; only once when they have paused
To rest, and make some change in carrying her,
He bends above her whispering 'My own,
'The sea-air will revive you, and to-morrow
'They say we shall be home—our little home—
'And then you will grow strong, and never I
'Will leave you any more, my only one.'
She smiles a placid though a languid smile,
A smile like dimpling of a water still
In tiny sunlight ripples when a drop

Drips from an oar suspended on its face.
'To-morrow, yes, to-morrow I shall be
'At home,' she murmurs vaguely, dreamily.
Then looks to Clement, whispering earnestly,
'It is enough: we have each other now.
'How have I prayed for this;' but then the tears
From weakness and emotion well again.
The men resume their burden all too light,
And as they travel, through the blinking leaves
Gleam summer lightnings from the tiny wave
With intervals of blue unruffled rest,
Which blends in Clement's musing spirit now
With that soft gleam of her faint opening eyes
Grown vague and vaguer like a weary child's
And their soft closing as in tranquil sleep.

Waits the felucca—she is borne asleep
On board of it: 'Name your reward, my friend,'
Clement in taking leave of Giudice,
Has said; but he 'Reward would only come
'To steal the crown King Conscience crowns my deed
'Withal. I thank you, and I glad accept
'Your feeling to me, but you know not, sir,
'How sore for poor men of integrity
'Their impotence of doing such as you,
'The rich they honour, some kind turn unbought.'
Warmly those gallant fishers every one
Bade them God speed, and Paoli liberal

For Clement dealt a largess to the men.
Each brings his little offering for their voyage
And presses it upon them, coverings,
A coat of oil-skin, bread and chestnut cakes,
A wine jar of pure grape juice with leaf bunches
Stopping the mouth; they set the sail lateen
The owner and his brother Paoli;
And soon careening to a fair brisk breeze
Dances away the tight felucca-boat
Swelling her sail, with pitchy cutwater
Cuffed in its prancing of the merry waves,
Shivered their baffled sapphire into foam
That frills the blue with evanescent lace,
Simmers in flying melting in the wake;
While Clement, whose delight is in the sea
To dwell by, sail on, swim and revel in,
The briny blow exhilarates; he feels
He can breathe free again, that she is safe,
Triumphs in his success and fills with hope.
Near her he sits, but gazes over sea
Toward their home, their sweet home over sea:
'Now is my outraged honour full avenged,
'And all her wrong:' his thought reverts to this.
No monstrous duty suffocating now!
Monstrous, for one high friend and half himself
Named it a crime, while all his righteous wrath,
His pride of caste, his individual pride,
These stunned, confused him with their counter-cries;

But deep mistrust of his own temperament
Shrinking from violence through every nerve,
Lest that should weight the scale conventional
Unduly, and he branded as a coward
Among his own hidden thoughts live evermore,
This had inclined the balance to revenge:
And yet he travelled up the castle path
With purpose indistinct, remembering
And half mistaking what his promise was
To Paoli before the cottage door—
Chance the midwife of men's imposing deeds.
Then he enacted o'er the tragedy,
And shuddered, picturing the agony
Of the man's look in digging bloodless nails
Into the rubble, till the crash of stone
Upon his fingers, and the curse in death,
Tingled all through him with the writhing tumble
And ghastly thud of what had been a man.
'You would have reached a hand to him for all
'He may have done to you my gentle child!
'What will you feel when you shall come to learn,
'When you shall know, that sweating cold he hung
''Twixt life and death, and I with hatred blind
'In a brute's soulless frenzy hurled him forth
'For ever out of God's blest light of life,
'Where we all dwell by sufferance of Him!
'Goaded thereto—not solely by my love—
'But by my own poor pride trailed scornfully

'And fouled of that man's feet—feet insolent
'With sickening beslavering of fools
'Who take the gewgaw puppet they themselves
'Have fashioned from the slime to be a god,
'Adoring their own drivelling handiwork!
'And should I suffer—I no doll but man,
'A man with power of brain to fashion men
'To their appointed end and point the way,
'A noble banned of that society
'Which honours such as he; nay, voluntary
'Exile from those plebeian-natured men—
'Say, should I suffer this automaton
'For all its human shape to grind me dead,
'Or should I seize it in the nick of time
'Shatter and shiver all its cunning springs,
'So save a man, so vindicate the right
'Here where the anarch red Injustice reigns,
'Bruising in him the world which does me wrong?—
'Wrong to myself! ah! 'tis myself, myself,
'Only myself, disguise it as I will.
'Forgiveness of a Christ who would have reached
'A hand of mercy even to such a foe,
'This might have saved a human soul for God!
'Perchance at least I might have saved mine own,
'Holding this maniac hand from slaying him,
'A mere weak man, a puny enemy,
'But wounding slaying a far deadlier foe,
'The monster parasite, my selfishness,

'Waxen fat upon the vitals of my spirit;
'With one grand bound upswung myself to Christ!
'And yet—and yet—if I had lifted him
'And he had slain me, what had chanced with her?
'I dared not save for Beatrice's sake.
'Did duty bid me leave my tender child
'In clutches of a were-wolf human-guised
'Even when my barrel covered the foul beast?
'Fantastic virtue of a casuist!
'In this cold-blooded analytic age
'We peer on deeds with such a mental lens,
'Some subtle tissue grows upon the sense,
'But we can name no more what thing we see.
'O for the instinct fine, the eagle gaze,
'Of stalwart men who march to mighty deed
'Straightforward, halting fumbling not as we
'Who blindly drift to action wondering
'If what we limply hold be good or ill.
'We grope in fogs of a too curious thought,
'We breathe oppressed for thinking how we breathe.
'I only know yon corpse lies heavily
'Upon my heart, as on yon dragon-flowers
'Whose crushed and gaping mouths are red with gore.'
Then his eye fell upon the primrose face
Of her who slept: so faded sunk it was
He shivered, venturing not to look and see
What pale vague fear lurked ghostly in his heart.
But now she moved and made a muffled cry

As from some ghastly vision in her sleep.
He turning to her kissed and softly called:
She crying again and starting from his touch
Woke quivering, moaning, fixing a scared look
Upon his face, then softened as she looked
And knew him, melting underneath his eyes
To love and joy and trust inviolable,
Like some frail snow-flake melting in the sun.
Then all stole back upon her, where she was,
And how; she whispered 'for a moment, love,
'I thought he held me, and behold! 'tis you!'
She smiled so sweet a smile; he prayed her tell
If she were able something of the past.
She told him the same story Paoli
Had learned of how the duke decoyed her thence.
So partly from her shy and broken words,
In part from notes which she had written yonder
And Clement later read in solitude,
He framed a story featured like to this.

The traitor in the cabin of the yacht
Addressed her with unbridled words of shame,
Urging his reckless flame to justify
The violence that he had dared to use.
'A spark of boldness women admire, he knew,
'Kindled in men by their consuming eyes.'
She wept insulted, but the fool obtuse
Extolled the brilliant life that she should lead

In his French castle or Corsican—she would
Not hate him when she knew him something more.
But when he neared her offering to touch
She shrank aside as from a leper's brush,
Drew herself up—for dignity and strength
Were hers in dire extremity—'hold off!'
She cried; 'you prate of boldness, a base coward;
'If Clement had been near, would you have dared'—
But then at naming Clement's name she broke
To tears again with sobbing 'Clement, Clement!
'Why were you far from me, my own, my own,
'Where are you?—Do you really think' she spoke
Again to her tormentor 'that a woman
'Who has loved him and been beloved by him,
'Even were he dead, nay buried a hundred years,
'Could stoop to love so poor a thing as you?'
He paled, she said, with anger at the words,
Quivered with hideous disappointed rage
And answered—'Are you saintlier than the rest?
'Coyness they all affect, and yet I find
'All ductile to my fingers like warm wax:
'But time will show—remember only this,
'You're in my power and likely to remain.'
Then forth he went and slammed the door behind.
She saw no more of him the voyage through;
He surly chewed in silence his rebuff,
Bewildering to him the ill-success.
A little of her undiluted scorn

And loathing in this interview with her
Had eaten through the tough rhinoceros hide.
He never met a women like to her,
Scorned faith in such; this woman dazed him sore.

He came not in the castle for awhile,
Irresolute on what were best to do.
His lacerated vanity drew horns
Within the shell shrinking from some fresh wound.
If he surrounded her with all respect,
All care and luxury, and left her free
Unimportuned awhile and undisturbed,
She in her loneliness might even crave
His presence, brooding on his passion strong,
Over his grandeur and the princely state
That he would gird his paramour withal.
And if she loved her mate (scarce credible
To him from that report the marchioness
Had made him of the man) she would forget—
They all forgot—when days elapsed and nought
Of him or from him she should hear; himself
Had been abrupt and blundered; she was not
Easy to win, but needed skill to play,
Glory the more in landing her; he'd say
That he had heard since from the marchioness
How Clement had returned and seemed consoled
By a renewal of his commerce old
With her own self—and so but yesterday,

The duke had plucked up heart to go again
To Beatrice, despatching Giudice
Craving for leave to visit her anon
When it should seem most fitting to herself.
She giving forced consent he came to her
With deferential courtesy and minced
'He only wished to see that all her wants
'Were full supplied—she had but to command.'
She answered 'Only give me liberty
'To seek my husband.' 'Madam, even in this
'I will obey you,' cunning he replied,
'Though I should sign my own death-warrant so,
'If you still ask it after what I tell.'
And then he chuckling told the cruel lie.
With confidence he spoke and half believed
Himself the falsehood, for the marchioness
Had said that Clement hankered after her.
The bold abrupt words with a deadly chill
Struck on the poor child, for she knew of old
He and the lady had been closest friends;
But then the glorious incredulity
Of love in face of all most damning facts,
A moment pale, emerged triumphantly;
The gross but specious lie that frighted her
Changed to a hideous yet transparent mask
Masking the traitorous leering of a liar.
'Add not base slander, sir, and calumny
'To your foul injury—you and your friend

'Can compass not the deathless fealty
'Of two leal hearts that love, and you blaspheme
'The sacred name whene'er you utter it.
'Clement and I can never cease to love
'Let come what may; if one were in the grave,
'The other would love on, and there in heaven,
'O there we'll love each other undisturbed,
'And only love each other evermore!
'Yet can a man be wicked as you seem?
'I love him, sir, and he Clement loves me:
'I think you did not know it, do not know,
'You've been deceived; the lady made you think
'We cared not for each other, that he cared
'For her and not for me, but that was false.
'He was all true, though I was often cross,
'Nor clever like to him, and could not talk
'Of learned things to him, and he was noble
'And I was poor; but then he knew how large
'My heart was, and he ruled there all alone.
'Let me go back to him, kind lord, I pray.
'He breaks his heart there, mine is breaking here!
'You do not seem unkind, but I am dying,
'I feel I am, and O! if I should die
'With not one look from his all-precious face
'To carry to the lonesome grave with me!'
She faltered here and brake to bitter tears.
Feelings alternating had chased each other
In the man's mind—astonishment and rage,

Bewilderment, compunction, jealousy,
A maudlin admiration fuelling
His jealous lust—she looked so lovely now!
And last the sense that she was safely trapped
Within his grasp, no witness to the wrong
He had been gloating o'er the vision of.

In speaking she had risen from her seat,
Advancing near him wringing her frail hands:
A step he made and seized her by the wrist;
She glancing quickly caught his wicked look,
Snatched herself free—'How foil me?' he exclaimed;
'Escape me now!' she clutching wild a knife
That lay nigh from the scarcely-tasted meal
Waved it with flashing eyes and answered 'So!'
Giudice entering, the baffled duke
Retired with baleful gaze and ne'er a word.
Then when he went she turned to Giudice,
Telling her story and imploring him
Piteously to befriend her; Giudice
Was only charged that morning with her care,
And scarce had spoken, but something in his look
Encouraged her to this forlorn appeal.
He soothed her like a father, settling her
Tender upon the couch and promising,
Though with a few brief words, to be her friend.
And she confided in him like a child,
He cheering her and bidding her be brave

For Clement's sake, and holding out a hope
That he might soon contrive release for her,
Concluding 'I am near you; only ring
'This little bell if you have need of me.'

She thanked her God for him upon her knees
That night, yet felt as if her slender strength,
Which needed kindly breath to foster it
And strong warm hands to chafe it, ebbed apace:
'I shall not see him: no, he will not come,
'Or he will come too late, when I am gone.
'My God! for him to look upon this face
'And I not know it! Ah, for him to press
'His mouth to mine, and I not feel him there!
'One kiss more, Father, only one; I go
'Willingly, happy, holding thy dear hand,
'Into the darkness; never looking back,
'Not once, to where he stands in thy warm light,
'If only, Father, thou wilt grant this prayer;
'But watch thou over him when I am gone!'
Soon from her sleepless bed the child arose,
Stole to the window in her linen white,
And looked toward the only spot she loved
Along the moonpath flecking tremulous
And thin the sea, like her own quavering hope,
Lost in the far immeasurable gloom;
Looked athwart groves in elf-light huddling grey,
Ruffled their dream to whisper murmurous

As from strayed elfwing skimming daintily—
But while the moonlight trickled through the leaves,
Anon their dusk heart kindling would secrete
From it a voice, so rendered it again
To-night in guise of song etherial pure
As its own self, now plaintive soft and low
Now radiating, flashing all abroad,
Articulate moonlight, named a nightingale.
That was her post all day, she would not stir
From thence; though books had been provided for her,
Listless she turned their leaves but could not read.
Paper was there, and pens, and she had written
Something for Clement about every day,
What happened, what she felt, at evening written.
Save for this only crept the weary time
In gazing through the loophole over sea,
Hailing each sail and watching eagerly
Its fleeting tranquil in the offing by
Hazy through silver labyrinths in the blue—
Why the child knew not, only it might come
Perchance and land him here; at least it came,
Blest thing, from yonder, yonder where he was;
The steamers—how she peered for a faint stain
Of smoke to dusk the delicate white down
That feathered yon horizon to the north,
Hingeing those azure valves of sky and sea!
And the first days at every step or sound

Without she fluttered: it might be the duke,
It might be Clement landed unaware.
She listless watched the coral lady-birds
Creep up the stone and splitting speckled shards
Of tiny fans unruffling for a flight.
Ah! how she envied yon brown melon-girl
Emerging from the cork grove up the steps
Of rock, her apron full of luscious fruit,
Chiding the dark-eyed roguish peasant-boy,
Yet laughingly, for winding his strong arm
About her waist, endangering the melons.
Ah! how she envied yon imperial bird,
Sublime possessor of immensity,
Breasting illimitable light, elate
Inhaling rich exhaustless draughts of life;
Or tiny siskins chattering as they flit,
Picking brown pine-cones for the kernels lithe.

A little silver lamp, with branches three
Budding soft light, and chain-swung candle gear,
They brought at evening, dim developing
The low-groined roof of stone, mouldings and cusps,
Spilling a random gleam on Persian rugs,
And oaken carven chests and Gothic chairs.
Giudice pulled her flowers the eve he came,
Purple corncockle, amaryllis white,
Crimson pomegranate-blossom, cyclamen.
She plunged her gaze in these: they grew at home;

He loved them, she might be disposing them
In their wee room to-night, or weaving them
Into her gracious hair; then languidly
She moving to a mirror 'gan to braid
Her tresses with them, plucking them away
Sudden and strewing them upon the floor,
Breaking to crying 'he will never see them,
'O! nevermore. I only long to die.'
At night she started from a shallow sleep
With but the gnawing of a wainscot mouse,
Or cracking of some dry wood with the heat;
Then she lay sick at heart, hearing the tick
Of death-watch weevil in the panel nigh,
Watching the first faint grey of dawn suffuse
The loophole, and the earliest twittering bird
In the near carob as he stirred and spun
In a fine drizzle from his down the dew;
Yet this but ushered in the loathsome day,
Which still might turn to lovely, bringing him!

Then he related what had chanced with him
In brief outline, but passing one thing over,
His meeting with the duke: she seemed so weak,
Nor dared he mar the present with a tale
Painful to her and damping to their bliss.

Now when in silence eyes were drinking eyes,
She feeling faint, the tactful Paoli,

Who kept aloof till now, at sign from Clement
Filled from the wine-jar some restoring wine
Presenting it to her: she smiled upon him:
'Good Paoli,' she murmured, 'ah! how good
'Have many been to me, how happy now
'I am who late repined and doubted God!'—
'He does but turn a moment his full face
'Away, yet holds us if we see or no;
'Still fold about us Everlasting Arms,'
The old man answered, bending low his head
With silver hair, and kissing her frail hand.
In sunset now flush tiny clouds like down
Torn from the bosom of some gentle bird,
Strewn fluttering crimson with her meek life-blood
By some fierce vulture's talons and bald beak,
Assailing her in heaven innocent,
Tranquil in airs hued like the iris-bloom.
And as the sun sank in the western water
She shivering the two threw over her
A mouflon skin one sailor lent to them.
And then she whispered Clement to bend near.
'Clement,' she said, 'I may not look again
'On Italy with you, on our sweet home;
'You'll see it, dear, but not with me; how well
'I would have loved once more to see it with you!
'It may not be—ah! Clement, do not weep;'
For he was sobbing, crushing the little hand,
And the hot tears fell blindly on her face,

So she wept too—'why think of this, my own?
'You feel so weak, but you will soon be well;
'I'll take you back to England; 'tis the heat,
'And all you've suffered.' 'Nay,' she soft replied,
'It may not be, my precious, it is time
'You knew it, for I feel the end is near:
'You must bear up; at first it will be hard,
'But you will learn to live without me, love.'
'I cannot: where you go there I must go,
'I cannot live without you anywhere.
'You would not leave me—O my Beatrice!'
He sobbing kneeling by her clasped her round
With his face close to hers—and if her foe
Drew nigh in any quarter from without,
He must have rent the man to hurt the child.
Yet now alas! it was no human foe;
But He that gave demanding her again.

Yet soon with strenuous effort he controlled
Himself, remembering what pain to her
His anguish wild must yield; she spake anon:
''Tis terrible to leave you, love, but He
'Who made us ah! how happy wills it so.
'Shall we receive the good and not the evil
'From the same hand? 'tis the same Father, love,
'Offers both cups. I do not fear to die.
'All has been well, and all must yet be well.
'I know that wheresoever I may go,

'If my soul live, my soul must be with you;
'Ere I can leave you I must cease to be;
'Only you will not see me for awhile,
'Until you join me where I go before.
'I told Him I would take His hand and go
'When He should call, and not look back to you,
'If I could see you, kiss you once again;
'You'll help me not to break my word to Him.

. . . . . .

'Where will you put me? in the little garden?—
'That would be sweet, that warm spot in the sun,
'Where the wild thyme breathes fragrance fitfully,
'The free blithe bee hums near one, then afar,
'Among the planes, hushed o'er with lullabies
'Eternal from the sea—our favourite spot,
'Where you will come and lie as we were wont
'To lie, and think about your little child.
'She will be near you, very near you still,
'Under your feet, ah! not upon your breast!
''Twas there I lay longing for you to come—
'And do you know, dear, it is very strange,
'But yonder in the castle while I stood
'One evening gazing homeward I believed
'That I was there awhile again, I saw
'The spot so plain, I smelt the smell of thyme,
'I even thought I saw you coming to me—
'But then I started, knew it was a vision.'
And Clement marvelled musing on his vision

Of her, but had no heart to speak of it.
'Next year the grass and daisies will be fresh
'And fair upon the spot as they are now.
'Then when He calls you, you will come and lie
'Still nearer me, down under the warm grass;
'You'll come there, won't you? you will keep the spot?'
He only pressed her closer for reply,
And but a rare sob broke the silence now.
She seemed to want to speak again, and signed
With a weak gesture for the cordial,
Which Clement took and tilted 'tween her lips.
'We wished,' she said, 'to have one little babe;
'Would for your sake it had been ordered so!
'You could not have been lonely then—but if,
'If you are very lonely you must try
'And love again; you need not quite forget—
'Keep one warm corner for your little one,
'One only in your large heart—only one.
'She will not mind, I think, and yonder, there
'In God's full facelight, there is room for all!'
Her glazing eyes looked heavenward and she smiled.

'Forgive me, love,' in broken accents now
She gasped, 'that I could not be all I wished
'To you, I was not clever enough for you,
'You know—and I was peevish very often;
'But I have loved you; you'll forgive me, sweet?'

'Tis you, 'tis you,' he faltered; 'nothing I
'Have to forgive, but you have much, my own;
'I tried you sore—but you have borne with me
'Like my own guardian angel that you were,
'And that you will be, till I turn to dust.
'My God! my God! may that be very soon.'

The breeze now scarcely flapped the idle sail
Against the mast, each little ripple kissed
With sucking plash and tilted the dusk boat,
Some oar knocked, and the loose-held tiller creaked;
And while he watched her face he heard the sound,
And knew the tender mellowing apple-green
And primrose yellow faded in the west.
But the change came into it, nameless change
And fearful; and he called her by her name:
The lips moved shaping 'Clement,' as he thought;
One laboured inspiration, and 'twas peace,
Peace in the gentle breast for evermore.
'She's gone,' a tender voice beside him said;
It was the old man bending over them.
If Clement heard he only buried his face
In hers whence all the warmth ebbed, and his arm
Threw round that face with fingers in the hair,
And pressed his mouth to hers convulsively,
As though he deemed that if his living heat
Could not pass into her, at least her cold
Might pass to him; and he might be for ever

Henceforth dead cold with her: for life was dear
Because she lived; now life was naught, and death—
Death was all-dear to him—for she was death.
Vain were the kind rich words of Paoli
In his deaf ear, and vain his gentle force
To draw him from her now that she was gone.
It needed all the strength of all the men
To draw him, as was needful, from the corse;
And, when they drew him, the wild vacant eye
And wildered gesture told the mind had given.

Freshened the breeze as night grew old; the moon
Sailed high and clear in heaven; but he sat
Staring toward the silent muffled shape.
Since he was quiet grown, old Paoli
Suffered him near the stretcher sit again
On an old box of fishing-gear; and still,
Wrapt in a cloak, he sat there all the night.
Only at intervals he lifted up
A corner of the veil upon her face;
Looked at her, kissed her forehead, and if any
Walked loudly near in managing the boat,
He turned and placed his finger on his mouth
With, 'Hush, she sleeps! as quiet as you can!'
Almost indeed, if he had been himself,
He might have deemed that she was but asleep
Now in the moonlight, quiet and serene.
When the same moonlight shone into their room,

In the dear villa yonder, many a night,
And fell upon her face with him awake,
Did it look very otherwise?—the long,
Long lashes of each upper eyelid closed,
Mazed with sweet sister lashes from beneath,
Laying fine shadow on the delicate cheek;
The pale brow misted round with tender mist
Of hair that deepens o'er the placid head—
Only there is no waking any more.

So wore the night; and the day following,
In afternoon, they made the little port—
A gemlike harbour all in miniature;
Its shining feudal palace on the rock,
With sentinel and cannon, cypress-cone
Relieved against the light, palmetto, palm;
The tiny steamer, with few fishing-boats,
In sapphire alternate with emerald;
Fringed fair with houses white 'mid orange-groves,
Embastioned of mountain-crests abrupt.
He who had taken, it seemed unconsciously,
Some little food they offered followed quiet
Paoli and those who bore that burden meek
Upon the shore, and only bade them heed
To take her gently—'tis a healthful sleep;
'She needs it; she was very tired, you know.'
Paoli had overheard her when she asked
Clement to bury her in that green spot

Within their garden—now arranged it so.
He did for Clement, with the maiden's help,
All Clement would have wished and done, he knew;
Wrote to the consul of his nation nigh,
Who came, but after the sad funeral.
Once only, when the bearers shuffled round
The deep grave, and the ropes were griding round
The coffin, Clement, who had sunk, it seemed,
Into a stupor vacant while they did
Their ghastly office for the heedless dead,
Sudden awoke and spread his arms and rushed
Toward the hole and shouted wild her name;
But they by force restrained him, leading him
Into the house, where till the following day
When the kind consul moved him to the town,
He wandered up and down, as he had done
That evening ere he sailed to seek for her—
Peering as then about their little room,
Above, below, as seeking her, and pausing
As if he listened, fancying she called.
And he would finger all her little things—
Her shawls and dresses, bracelets, and her work
With needle left in it, the little stocking
For some poor child—wearing an air intent,
As waiting half bewildered for her step
Upon the stair, and listening for her voice.

Book IV

By kindly tending was the mourner won,
How loth soever, back to common life;
Who after reckless roaming in far lands
Bent last his course towards his native shore
Imperatively summoned thitherward.
And still he loved to minister to want,
Warm friend to grief, and still a mellow smile
He wore for innocent joy and loving bliss;
But his bright curls were thin upon his brow;
Wan, pale, and aged untimely he appeared,
While fixèd sadness like a yewtree cast
Perpetual gloom on his deserted heart
As o'er some ruined cloister which the living
Tread no more but avoid; 'tis consecrate
Unto the dead who rest beneath its flags.
Alas! for him restless philosophy
Had peered and fingered till the walls of creeds,
So venerable and solid as they seemed
In the twilight, fell crumbling here and there,
Or tore to shreds and gaping made a way
For dismal wind and rain that are no dream.
But he was of a soul amphibious,
Two elements essential unto it,
One for imagination and for thought,

The other, sustenance of life and love.
He lived and loved, he lost himself in her,
A second self far dearer lovelier
Than his own self; she from his vitals torn,
Earthward he sank all mangled to the core.
Forget he could not, would not if he could;
And things which could not love pronounced him
weak,
And things without a mind pronounced him fool,
Sneered at his dark and vain philosophy;
While ruddy animals of vigorous frame
Strutted and gabbled of strong character;
While pious folk averred he made an idol
Of her he lost, and God was jealous of her,
Jealous of Clement's mighty love for her,
Counting it so much pilfered from himself.
Was God then but a greater Marchioness?
Clement should lavish not his love on her,
But while she shivered in the outer cold,
He with mouth rigid, lifting treacherous eyes,
Should say ''tis corban!' spilling it in the snow.
We may be impotent in love, but ah!
Shall we blaspheme the All-Father for our fault?
The Love Eternal feeding our weak love,
Yearning to flush it through a myriadfold
Until it leaps and broadens to embrace
In its divine blaze all the universe—
The Love Eternal jealous of our love!

Yet he became no hermit, only he,
Though unforeseen he had inherited
The title of his forefathers and estates,
Could herd not with the brainless moneyed tribe
Who swarmed about him crawling at his feet!
Old stately dames, portly or vulture-necked,
Grew unaware obsequious and bland;
He trode upon them as they seemed to crave,
But straightway drove them forth without their dole,
While they with meekness very Christian
Endured his 'little eccentricities.'

Could he have taken, as he was wont of yore,
What we name heaven for grand reality,
Not for mere painted splendours in the dome,
He might have held communion with her still,
Scarce interrupted by the change of death;
Failing but as the recognition fails
A moment of a friend we left in pain
And sorrow, whom we find again elate
And radiant with health and happiness:
'Indeed I did not know you' we exclaim,
But straight we know him and rejoice together.
Communion with her would only fail
Through death as recognition fails when we
Are travelling and come to some fair spot
In twilight, vague aware of dusky scenes,
Water and mountain; in the sunrise fails

When we awake and fling the window wide
Beholding mountains crowned and girt with light,
Torrents and lakes their trains of flashing gold.
He would have shivered gazing down the chasm
Where she seemed lost, but would have heard anon
Her call from yon sunslope, and shading eyes,
Dazzled a moment, have beheld her climb
Godward for aye buoyant and luminous!
But Reason banned the quest forlorn of Hope,
And coldly sternly whispered 'she is dead.'
For so alas! ran Clement's wayward thought—
'Though nought may perish in the universe,
'Yet Nature is the Proteus in a flux!
'For us we live in children, or in friends,
'In every moment's subtle influence.
'But is not influence expended power
'Feeding the world upon the garnered store
'We name a person? for the tissues wear,
'The organs fail, slow dwindles out the store.
'Not the most selfish man can live for self,
'But lovers take the life-law to their hearts.
'They give themselves—God takes them at their word:
'Who shall complain? His universe will grow
'A little by their grand self-sacrifice,
'And they fulfil their own ideal so.'
So Clement deemed she lived indeed, but lived
In him, in all the noble and good in him;

Her life, as boastless of its nectar rare
And yet as lavish of it as the flowers,
Living in him transmuted, flowed again,
Like nectar grown to honey in the bee,
Rich stored in cells of individual art
To feed mankind; yea and her very death
Wailed in the weird magic of his strain,
Tinged all his song with its own plaining minor,
Sinking to human spirits' very root;
Circuiting wider, meshing souls who dwell
In dark seas of experience and deep—
'Yet can the individual person cease?
'Would that she lived yet, howsoever far
'From me! wept Clement often—'tis a dream,
'Beautiful, natural, noble, yet a dream!
'For why may not the individual cease?
'The newborn babe was none a year ago—
'Itself but person now in embryo.'

Yet it had been herself that Clement loved,
The lovely childlike maiden and no other;
No principle; a simple country girl;
And still he yearned for love to fill his heart.
But should he banish his once chosen child
Because she nestled in his bosom no more?
They were to love for ever; was a year
Or two so long to keep her memory green,
To keep her memory green with secret tears?

Then would come death, dear death, with breath
grown sweet
And warm from kissing on so dear a mouth.
Must he wipe out the Eden of his life
So clean from reverence and memory?
For him he could not.

A mysterious
Chamber there was in gallery remote
Of the ancestral castle where he dwelt.
None entered there but, in the dead of night,
Himself—'twas whispered that her picture hung
There and before it ever burnt a lamp.
There were the precious little remains of her,
Dresses and trinkets, books and some dried flowers
They pulled and pressed together in the South.
And some affirmed that he who worshipped not
In any temple worshipped nightly there.
For was not she the noblest symbol God
Vouchsafed to Clement's own especial life,
Next unto Christ, supreme and given to all?
At times he felt she must be living still;
Did not her spirit flash upon his own
At intervals? she seemed so very nigh—
Yet that might be a vision of the brain!

While others spilling malice from their fangs,
Because to herd with them amused him not,

And he was proud to all pretentious folk,
Hinted him not abstemious from delights
Of sense, as men might deem for all his love
Buried in that one little grave with her.
Yet since his intimates, (but one or two)
For all his genial sympathy, no more
Set foot in certain precincts of his life
And strange lone tortuous spirit than within
That gallery of his ancestral castle,
Ancient and vast and tombed in snowclad pines,
This was but vague suspicion to the last.
Yet he was not the man that he had been.
Though stern he seemed and silent commonly,
When mortal anguish and despondency
Sombred him more than wont—he shut himself
For days alone, nor any ventured nigh.
But from his incoherent muttering,
Some deed or deeds of darkness men affirmed
Must weigh upon him; visions haunted him,
Hallucinations often troubled him;
And every night the menials avowed
He talked with some one in the lonely room,
Though never any made him a reply.
Yet once a servant bolder than the rest
Lingering nigh the chamber caught some words
Like these 'If thou hadst lived, life of my life,
'Blown drifted as I am by passion fierce,
'By veering speculation, all my days,

'The evil bitter taint within my blood
'Of gloom and madness might have reached to thee,
'And these hands, even these, have torn thy breast!
'Ah! if the chill damp of the outer world
'With its dull soulless death of every day
'Had eaten corroding with its rust away
'The mirror-sheen, the substance of our hearts!
'Have I not seen old people numb and cold—
'Who once were lovers—with but breath enough
'Left now to drivelling jeer at what they were,
'Beautiful living men and women; now
'Dead-alive bodies ghastlier than the dead!
'With all the immortal life in the young world
'Pulsing and throbbing, surging them about,
'Nigh deaf and blind, yet lifting palsied hands
'Quavering "O great tide, come no farther in!"
'Yet could I ever make thee happy, love?
'I was too weird, too grave and self-absorbed,
'My sunny child, for thee—'twas well to go—
'For might I not have dazed thy very soul
With my bewildering counsels, a blind guide,
'Leading thee blindly, leaning on me, child?
'I brought a dark chill on thy sunny life,
'Who would have shed my heart's blood out for thee!
'Fed on thy life I live, but thine went out
'From feeding mine—this all-accursed life—
'Ah! let me quench it and lie down to rest! . . .
'Beatrice! your lips move! O speak to me!'

And as with horror paralysed he stood
He fancied that a softer voice replied;
Then all was silence—but the listener
Shivering stole again to whence he came.

But Clement made a yearly pilgrimage
To yon dear shrine, his Compostella fair,
That lowly villa, musing on her grave
In sunshine and by moonlight wandering
About the orange-groves and mountain-paths,
Or sitting in the old room as of yore.
'Twas there he made the song concerning her
That had for title 'LOST,' and thus it ran.

LOST

With evening hued like autumn leaves
The porch is fair, still sleeps the air,
She comes through yonder light and weaves
Flowers as I loved them in her hair.

This is her hour, from yonder groves
She comes to me, upon my knee;
You'll know her, for whene'er she moves,
For joy she sings like bird or bee.

The butterfly in glory lit
With pulsing wings on flower that swings
Caught in her shadow will not flit,
So sweet the trouble that she brings.

The redbreast sidling shy to peck
  Wee crumbs that fill the window sill,
Who timorous veers a tiny neck,
  From her pink palm sips tame and still.

I only watched in church with her
  Through ivy stream the flickering beam,
Upon her sweet slim feet to stir
  And dally in a fond day-dream.

Her singing never took by storm
  The listless ear, the stranger's ear,
Yet hymns of seraph could not warm
  My heart like her frail accents near.

I would to all fair sights that stir
  In earth and sky be blind for aye
For one more far-off glimpse of her,
  Scarce lovely to the loveless eye.

And when among the crowds I move
  Some air or dress, some tone or tress,
That savours of my own lost love
  Will draw me doting through the press.

To find a stranger and dispel,
  And make to fleet, the glamour sweet,
Fond glamour known for dream too well,
  More dear than all the friends I meet.

With whisper of her mellowing grain,
  With treble of brook and bird and tree,
Earth joys for ever to sustain
  The bass eternal of the sea.

And years flushed o'er with flowers of bliss
Dance every one from shade to sun,
Fresh youths and maidens yearn to kiss,
As we have done, O little one!

I lipped the joy, now yield my place,
For me no more kind years may pour,
Who only want one meeklit face,
One face gone out for evermore!

But why, ah why! when day burns low
Doth that sweet hum still faintly come,
As of sweet talk that used to flow
Through her closed door to my lone room?

Poor fool! 'tis but the mumbling wind
That talks like her, nor means to jeer;
For subtler wind are love and mind,
And she but wind who nestled here!

But when for six years he had dragged the chain
Of life without her, revolution flashed
Among a noble people who uprose
To free themselves from tyranny or die.
He joining with enthusiasm fought
As one who set scant value upon life.
After the battle on the gory clay
They found him through the heart shot lying dead—
A portrait on him of a lovely woman
Wet from his heart's blood, with a tress of hair
Let into crystal on the side reverse;

A shred of writing naming him by name
They found beside, with earnest-breathing prayer
That if 'twere possible he might be borne
To Monaco and buried where he named.

Twin crosses in white marble mark the spot,
Small, graven, side by side, and two low mounds;
While lullabies eternal from the sea
Float dreamy o'er the eternal slumberers.
Oft an old man brings wreaths of immortels
For the two crosses tottering and weak.
Some spiral grasses whisper, marking soft
Their shadows on the marble and in flower
Nestling into the graving of the names.
But those two hearts, the turbulent and the meek,
Worn out and weary slumber full of peace,
And in their deaths they are divided not.

Upon her stone at dead of night
Flashed the wild rain in lightnings white,
She unaware of sound or sight.

The shadowing minster clanged on high,
Chariots of loud life hurried by,
Disturbing ne'er the sleeper nigh.

Her little girl had grief to smother
E'er since the father took another
In place of her own tender mother.

By moonlight to the grave she crept,
Tears on her mother's name she wept, ...
. . . Who the same sleep unheeding slept.

SONG

'LIKE HER, BUT NOT THE SAME'

I SEEK her by the stream that laves
  Yon crumbling convent wall,
And in the silent place of graves
  That loved her soft footfall,
Then in a dream through evening calm
Again we wander by the palm.

But lo! this glooming crust unstirred
  Gives o'er the sombre glow
Of caverned fire—my dream is blurred,
  I wake—the fire is low. . . .
I hear alone the wind and rain
To-night chill beat my windowpane.

Yet she is nigh—behold, they say,
  Yon gracious queenly dame!
More cold this cold heart turns away
  Like her—but not the same!
I knew I left *her* lying where
Yon graves in sunlight sleep so fair!

KÀTHLEEN

Two children in the olden time,
Who in a summer evening gleam
Up to the front coach-window climb
To watch the team;

Four grey blood-horses in a steam
That draw the children home from town
Through orchards rosy with the beam
Of day gone down.

Dear is the fair familiar way,
The merry children point elate
To spots endeared of old in play—
Wood, stile, or gate.

'Tom, you remember? there's the pool
'You threw the poor old spaniel in.'
'There, Kate, we found the red toadstool
'By yon gold whin!'

In far vein-purple tracts of sky
A star thrills; blackbird, nightingale,
Pulse ecstacies from maybloom nigh
And sweetly fail.

And then the sleek-haired maiden sings,
Both children kneeling toward the glow
While the fond boy about her clings,
Soft sings and low

A ditty that he loves to hear,
Of gentle girl who died, 'Kathleen;'
Yet gathers in his eyes the tear—
Her name 'Kathleen.' . . . .

The years flow by; some mourners move
Through drifting leaves of autumn slow;
A youth the sister of his love
Follows in woe.

And as they leave her in the rain,
A milkwhite doe she often fed
Through the dim forest limps in pain
To lean its head

Upon the harsh grave-wall and die.
More sweet to it than dells of green,
Where mate and fawn sun-dappled lie,
Thy grave, Kathleen!

JUNE ROSES

No lower, no lower, along the lane!
For the place it was here I know,
Where over the far meadow's bloomy wane
Yon rose waves to and fro,
I remember the curve of the flexile spray
And the way these roses grow.

How they float on the maze of the verdure lush,
And ruffle to feel the breeze,
Where they lie full-blown with a delicate flush!
Do you love them most, or these
Opening coy with a crimson blush,
Hiding golden hearts for the bees?

Do you mind how you bade me cull you a rose?
But the spray swam over my head
With a stress of air, 'one would say that it knows,
'As you breathed the word it fled;
'With the sister blooms it would fain repose
'Till the gentle leaves be shed!'

'Little skilled in reading the heart of a flower,'
Your answering tones I heard;
'See close to your hand the pale rose cower
'Lest you take her at her word!'
But there fell the first drop of a thunder shower,
And the rose it was left and blurred.

Is it easier now to remember the spot
Where we paused in the sweet green lane
Than to find the warm feeling we soon forgot,
Left there like the flower to waue?
She said 'there are hearts that blossom not
'Like the roses of June again!'

'AND SHE WAS A WIDOW'

Yea, thou hast left us, love, left us alone,
Coldly the rain, love, sobs on thy stone,
Still throng the world's pulse full life and sound,
Thine only solitude, stillness profound!

In a fathomless want the world labouring rolls,
Importunate hands ever reach to their goals,
The fruits we long wild for, the fruits we attain,
Feed our longing with ashes, and still we are fain.

River of life ever ample unfolding!
Ships we beheld from their anchorage slide
All the burning midwater yet royally holding,
Dost thou lose, love, thy joy in their pomp and
their pride?

Yea, in sooth, for the warm nook is vacant anigh me,
Warm nook in the sweet grass from whence we beheld
Stately movements of nations, yet while they pass
by me
From wont oft I turn to thy corner of eld.

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Yet ne'er by the veiled lamp in day's long declining
As I read from the day-leaf thy silver-white hair
Will bend low to hear me more, lowly inclining,
Slumber surprising thee hearkening there!

To how many a chance, like a blossom or bent
Along the life-lapse idle eddying by,
Stole a sweet fleeting beam from our loving look lent;
But now in one gloom let them fleet, let them die!

Yet the world never more with its malice may
sunder,
Nor ever more sever chill mists from within,
Not a mortal my heart's mellow memory plunder
One has folded our love from the tarnish of sin!

But the earliest cuckoo calls from the bough,
There are liltings of young love, nests in the tree,
We too have dreamed a sweet dream, I and thou—
And we wait for a sweeter awaking to be!

A WALK IN SPRING

I

Do you remember our walk that day
To the church upon the steep
With grass about the wall so gray
Where the weary slumber deep?
Like a heavenly hand the sunshine lay
To bless them in their sleep.

II

We passed by the wicket-gate you know
To the tender-budding wood,
Dew lingering in the blooms below,
Where intermittent flowed
Warm sprinkled sunlight to and fro
With the leaflets' frolic mood.

III

By the broken gate that idly swung
Near umber tilth ajar
Our eyes to faint horizons clung,
Bloomed as young wheat-sheaths are.
You deemed it must be sea that hung
Blent with yon skies afar.

IV

Lo! red thorns on the briar fair,
And buds uncurling green,
Birds-notes flash lavish everywhere,
Spill water brimmed, or lean
Long plainings on the summer-air
That seem to sleek the sheen.

V

A foal lithe frisking round his dam
In cowslipped meadow plays;
Pushing, a weak-limbed nestling lamb
Beneath his parent sways;
With cool slant shade each blade's green flame
A sister blade allays.

VI

When we had chosen a primrosed nook,
Some rustle made you start,
You feared a snake and you bade me look,
But I stilled your little heart;
Last year's sere fern a blackbird shook,
Or a weasel stole athwart.

VII

We gazed beyond the meadows low
And apple-blossomed farm,
To nebulous woodlands where the glow,
Leaning so close and warm,
Woos their shy secrets' yielding flow
With zephyr's whispered charm.

VIII

Shy secret of the bud and leaf,
Shy secret of the bloom,
And such as now in Springtime flood
Sweet nests in emerald gloom
Of boscage where some finch may brood,
And a stray beam only come.

IX

But summer, I deem, had sunk that day
Not into flowers alone;
She woo'd shy secrets as they lay
In two young hearts unblown;
Love breathed upon them in their May,
Till each in each had grown.

X

And I watch your pulses' gentle heaves
Flutter your skin of silk,
Till the shadow of some fluttering leaves
Plays on your wrist of milk,
And even to your white bosom cleaves
Soft amorous lights to bilk.

XI

About you stealing sweetly coy
To yield you all to me—
Birds flowers weaving as they toy,
Vague heaven round me and thee—
Until alone with our young joy
In the world we seem to be!

BLIND AND DEAF

Part I

A girl lies quiet in a humble room
The fresh spring dawn doth tranquilly illume,
Pale but for flush of fever on her face,
Yet calm she sleeps now in that quiet place;
Nor though the little casement stand ajar
Can the sunlight her first sweet slumber mar,
So well her rose and honeysuckle try
To soften the day for her with greenery:
Her dear rose-linnet in his osier cage
With blushing breast the season doth presage:
But poorly seems that cottage room adorned—
Rude pictures such as wealthier folks had scorned
And little figures rude of earthenware
Of boys and girls, beasts blue and white, are there
Upon the chimney-shelf: the bed is mean
With a patched coverlid of varied sheen.
A mother works and watches by her side,
'Tis now the crisis of the turning tide:
Say, shall it whelm the silent sufferer
Or at her very lips ebb down from her?
Profound that slumber, but she wakes at last;

She does not move, the lurid visions past;
For now she tastes the bliss of painlessness,
Too weak to stir or think, yet feels no less
'Sweet life is mine, not death; now I shall live.'
And soon creep thoughts like creatures that revive
From winter's frost—'I thank my Father, God,
'For I was young to lie beneath the sod;
'I would not leave dear Mother and the weans—
'Do not sweet scents come through my leafy screens?
'Is not the young year glad with budding greens?'
Now would she turn and look if one be near
Her heart yearns after, but she scarce may stir:
Yet the quick ear that listens by the child
Has caught the rustle, and with bounding wild
The mother's heart leaps up: she leans above,
Love in her eyes to light her weary dove
Home from the waste whose bound no wanderer knows,
Finger on mouth, with motion to repose—
Yet the maid pays no heed as if distraught,
But thus meanders her untrammelled thought:
'I do not hear the children on the stairs
'With softened voices as they play at bears;
'Yet little Tom and May disturbed me not,
'They knew that I was ill—maybe remote
'From now the time when I was taken first.
'And yet—'tis strange—I do not hear as erst
'The measured clicking of the old Dutch clock
'Upon whose face the ship was wont to rock;

'Tis very dark; hardly I fathom it;
'Am I alone? or would poor Mother sit
'Without a fire or candle?' Then she grows
Bewildered rather, till the fond face glows
Near and more near, until it feels her brow;
This makes her gentle spirit overflow
With limpid joy; returning kisses faint—
'You have been ever by me, Mother, saint!'
She murmurs. 'Once more in the dear sunshine
'With you I shall go wandering, mother mine!
'But light a candle, darling, it is dark!
'On moonless nights there always came some spark
'Of starlight through the honeysuckle's trail;
'You had a fire when I began to fail,
'When I remember last.' 'Hush! dearest child
'You must not talk now,' prays the mother mild;
'But O my God!' she utters in her heart,
'Now the spring sun she longs for doth impart
'His glory to us all—does she awake
'Ne'er to behold him more? Thou wilt forsake
'Not her, O Father, whom Thou dost awake
'To life within my arms!' 'A light, I pray!'
The child cries anxious, now athirst for day.
Then falls a large hot tear upon the cheek
Of her forlorn, a tear the mother weak
May not restrain: but all remaining still,
No light, no answer, dire forebodings fill
Her fainting heart with sudden hands and chill:
'Speak, my own Mother, answer me,' she pressed;

So now the mother knows that she had guessed
The bitter truth, the whole; she stoops and winds
Her arms about the child, who troubled finds
The cheek she best loves wet against her own.
She weeps too, but the little heart has flown
Where it was always wont distressed to fly.
Far as it seems unto the world, yet nigh
To a child's heart, that inner sanctuary—
'And would I face even death, how willingly!'
She whispered, 'Father, so to be with Thee!
'And shall I not be with Thee even now?'
Then quietly with pale unruffled brow
She turns upon the pillow, and she speaks
With a sweet patience, only with the breaks
Of now and then a sob 'My mother press
'Me to your side if truly I shall guess:
'Am I not deaf?' Into her breast she draws.
Then the child falters, after but a pause,
'And, Mother, press me if I should be blind!'
As of love's agony she feels the bind
Of those fond arms anew—and while she drifts
Far from the old blest earth, whose glory shifts
From eye to ear, from raptured ear to eye,
That she has loved with what intensity!
She knows that two new fibres strong as death
From now her spirit to her mother's wreathe,
And while in vain her eyeball seeks the ray
Deep in her heart dawns the Eternal Day!

Part II

Slow mantled Spring till Summer overflowed
Life's goblet, ebbed to Winter; when it glowed
Afresh, at casement meek behold her sit
Where butterfly-like breezes wanton flit;
Her all-unspotted careful-ordered dress
Denotes of tending eyes the watchfulness;
A book of raised type is on her knee,
But one arm on the window leaneth she,
Her head upon her hand with face full-turned
Upon the Spring, as if her spirit yearned
To that—for grand about her all the tide
Of light that lives in Heaven deep and wide
Rolls in, and bears a myriad glorious things,
And all its wealth upon the maiden flings.

For lo! the Spring hath burst her chrysalis,
Life in her wings and rapture in her kiss:
And she hath flushed through all the dreary wood
To touch and light them to a flame of buds;
Her gleamy hand so brimmed with violets,
Through her strained fingers here and there she lets
Them fall to grass, where amethyst they lie

And watch her, each a sylvan spirit's eye:
Intense reflections of her rainbow fans
Start living bluebells when the light engrains,
And primroses, and stars of golden glow
Called celandine—the year hath ripened now!

Her little cottage on the border stands
Of a great wood and high—with pasture lands
Unrolled beneath, whereto a lawny slope
Inclines with many a softly rounded group
Of brake gorse-goldened or foam-sprayed with may:
Both through the fronting wood, and far away,
Her window looks; to lustrous fields of grass
Hedge-girt, elm-dotted that the kine may pass
The midday heats there chewing mild the cud,
With limp ear flapping tickling flies that stud;
To blossomed orchards, fallows loamy brown,
Wheatfields and clover lessening to the town,
The town smoke-nested with its abbey grey,
On to horizons azure fused with day.

Bronze chestnut-buds, wrapped gummy as they grow,
Swelled fluffy, spilling with an overflow
All unaware of flimsy tissue green,
Little leaves crumpled, dress for fairy queen;
So all the trees a rarest mist o'ercrept
Of verdure, and condensing daily swept

Throughout the woodland; tints impleaching wed,
Young oak-leaves chrysoberyl tinct with red,
Glossy with oils that wait upon their birth;
While yon fresh beech-leaves moving as in mirth
Seem lithe to lie upon the delicate air
As though too gross to let them sink it were,
Fringed with a down as silky as may mist,
When edgeways-lit, a lip that you have kissed:
Green flakes of clustered vivid light they fell
I deem upon the boughs, and oh! how well
They're quenched with mutual shadows and relumed
Over and over; note how gently gloomed
And chequer-lit their pale smooth-rinded bole,
Even as the lichened bark where ivy stole.

Fresh scented fern at tips brown-scaled and twirled,
Fronds folded as an infant's toes are curled,
Grows free amid the campion crimson-lake
And where stellaria graceful-leaved doth shake,
While fleshy mushrooms rayed beneath with fawn,
Growth of a night, dot thick the dewy lawn.
Dreamy the down of sallow-catkin swims
In the mild sunlight; shall we note the whims
Of yon wee caterpillar hued like jade
On his silk subtle jewel-glimmered thread?
But now deep hides in many a hawthorn bush
A nest of pale eggs tiny with a blush
And mottle of wine; from lichens woven and moss,

Horsehair and bents and feathers, sheltering close
A mother chaffinch whose gay mate sits nigh
And chirps to her—yon linnet dipping by
Sings as he flies, and perching on the ash
A runnel long of melody doth flash
From him and wander through the woodland far,
Whose notes impetuous ecstatic war
Which shall be first; they hustle and they throng
As all the teeming Spring were in the song;
That little elf will utter forth the whole;
Well may he quiver, and beyond control
The rapture whirl him from the leafy shade
With shimmering wings adown the sunlit glade!
But he is not alone—hark! trickling notes
From the hid blackcap, tenderly there floats
Sweet cooing of the cuckoo and the dove,
Clear pipes the blackbird, and a thrush's love
Flutes softer—hark! the lark is in the blue
Whose music-sea the sunlight eddies through;
With these the whitethroat, many a bird, combines,
As if to shoot and cross a myriad lines
Of melody entangling all the soul,
And in a web of breathless bliss to roll.

In a warm haze the brakes are rounded soft;
A grey-green exhalation here aloft
They seem, with thinner edges luminous
Even as a cloud's: from their dusk hearts of rose

And blackberry the cinnamon nightingales
Skim into sunlight gurgling amorous tales,
Or pensive call to her who darkling glows
Over their own live secret—where—he knows!

All this and more—by so much as beside
The year teems with of flowers elfin-eyed,
And mosses fairy-branched of amber stems
All capped with fairy urns concealing gems
Of seed, a world to insects metal-sheened,
Lambs by their mothers frisking newly-yeaned—
All this and more, commingled in the tide
Ever calm undulating far and wide
Of air and light in bounteousness sublime
And all exhaustless, as in former time,
Floats now about this humble cottage maid.
Rich should she be, though in mean weeds arrayed:
Rich hath she been in flinging wide her soul
To every humblest claimant of the whole:
And rich she is, although that sea in sooth
Of glory vainly sweeps and summons both
The closed and silent portal of her eye
And of her ear, as where deserted lie
Sea-lappèd palace-walls blithe once with life;
But as in vain the ripple-lisp or strife
Of clamorous white surge would waken now
The sullen rock, so vainly woos the sun
And all Spring-voices calling to the stone

Of her dead sense whom God makes deaf and blind!
Yet is He still the Father—and refined
Intensely grow the senses that are left,
Nor is the girl of touch and smell bereft;
So as she sits and leans out to the Spring,
She may not rush with bird-like wantoning
Into the woods as erst the child would do;
Yet still remain of channels one or two
Through which the living glory may invade:
Does there not wander in from garden and glade
A wash of fragrance, honeysuckle scent,
Acacia or seringa myriad-blent,
Now this now that, and can she not feel cool
The downy breeze upon her forehead full?
Then these with magic wand shall summon all
Yea all the summer in her spirit's hall;
Exquisite vision something shadowy
Such as to Eden dreaming bards supply,
Such as to Milton blind dwelt ever nigh.
Imagination that forbids the sense
Explore some sweet lane's winding, tangle dense,
Because she holds her fantasy more fair
Or dear than earth, Imagination rare
Is opening this blind girl's inner eye
To that near world whose fadeless beauties lie
Substance of ours that only bloom to die!

And once her fingers touched the raisèd type

Upon her knee, when lo! her mother's lip
Pressed to her forehead—then a radiant smile
Dawned on that wan blank face, as otherwhile
I saw a grey blank rock illumine dim
Through watery skies—though vain the clamorous chime
Of surges and the flash of sea-birds, mark!
Heaven streams with pearl, deep smiles the mountain dark!
She speaks, 'O mother, wonderful to read
'That He who calls Himself my friend indeed
'Calls me His friend.—Can then the Master need
'Me as His friend? on this my spirit feed!'

SUMMER CLOUDS AND A SWAN

Now in late Summer massy foliage
Shows dark and heavy, and the beechmast browns
Yon lofty beeches of the smooth grey bole,
That stand upon a mossy turf which seems
To undulate as if with languid airs
Breathing beneath the glowing tapestry
Of moss now vivid now a sombre green.
The bank insensibly to water slopes,
A narrow tract of water with the banks
In easy hail of one another: I stand
Facing the grove beyond the narrow water
Nestled in lime-leaves murmurous with bees:
The water from my vantage-ground appears
A gleaming mirror for the banks and sky.
Ah! what a sky! in yonder hazy blue
Floats a white cloudlet shading into grey,
A drift of white soft-outlined bright and pure,
Letting the eye sink in luxuriously,
Dusking to fringe of delicate slate-grey
Most like a wing of blue-backed herring-gull
Dishevelled ruffled all the downy rim,

Silverly saturate and soaked with light,
Tranquilly floating in a blue profound.
Shored is yon skiey wash of paly blue
With fainter snow of vapours hazed from heat,
Subsiding dim with graduation fine
In that sky-water, as a mellow stroke
From some great bell to silence ebbs away,
Faints off, dissolves, and fails insensibly—
Their billowy bulky mass of mountain soiled
As with a tinge of copper and of brass;
Their mounded subsidences here and there
Worn smooth with long abrasion of rich light
In streaming over, beams dissolved imbibed
In part while flowing, but in part flung free,
Swimming in shafts of pearl incumbent long
Upon the opalescent shadowy air,
Haunt of still angels floating restfully
Bound earthward upon ministries of love.

See yonder, mottled all the space with fleece
Or curdling milk or feather balls most fair,
Between them gulfs and channels of dim blue
Like sunny Alpine ice thin-oversnowed.
Some lawny mists move flimsy, letting filter
Blue heaven through them, even as shredding foam
Wears airy grey bewraying a blue billow:
These radiate to nigh impalpable
Fan-rays long film-blown, fingered luminous

Of amorous air soft frolicsome and warm.

Lo! there hath grown a fibrous length of mist,
A delicate stalk faint-fuming into wealth
Of leafage, blossoming indefinite;
A spine aërial radiating fine;
Lucent plant-animal that loves the sea,
Expatiating still luxuriously
In the blue bath with feelers all abroad,
Glad unsuspicious free unreticent—
Longreaching veinings in the gauzelike haze
Tenderly marbling the cærulean,
Now dense now rare like lawn we steep in water.

How prodigal of lovely wayward change
Is cloudland subtle, silent, unaware,
Ravelling, unravelling tissues gossamer,
Not to be prisoned in colour or in word,
Pageant regarding not if any see!

Light of a stilly summer afternoon
Drowsy, voluptuous and sumptuous,
Rich, honey-heavy, sheeny, breathing balm!

Yon beech-grove rises dark against the light,
And o'er the beech-grove higher up the light
Climbs a tall hoary lanthorn-tower and spire;
The light all tender with a pearly haze

Hued like thin fins and flanking of a fish
Fresh-netted live and shining with the wet—
While all the scene repeated lies below,
The tract of blue, the cloudwing floating there,
The faint snow shores, the fin-like opal light,
And in it the beech-groves and loftier tower,
With through its belfry windows mullioned
The warm light glowing as in human eyes.

Now in the lower reflected gulf of blue
A swan sails tranquil with a stately neck
Arched long, with orange beak, and lifted wing
Sail-like on either side, how soft and pure!
Have they not fallen these wings from yonder blue,
Out of the soft white cloud there, so akin
They seem to it? And O the tenderness
Of the blue shadow, scarcely shadow or blue,
Haunting yon dells of down behind the wing!
Surely the white cloud when it fell from heaven
Fell with the heavenly motion lingering in it,
For do but note how tranquil and how still
The cloud sails yonder and the swan sails here!
Yet lo! a sudden impulse of the bosom
Thrills all the placid water feeling it
To dimpling smiles that waft luxurious light
Into the pendulous faces of sweet flowers,
Lush grasses, harebell, eyebright, sorrel leaves
That fringe the flood whose heart enshrines them all.

While his dim double the swan floats upon
Flickers beneath him with the twin-born ripple
From his breast sloping either side away,
Melts like snow dropped in water, yet remains.
He ruffles yielding wavering images
Of church and tree, and of the sky above,
But all the fragments gather as he goes.
Thus if a dream, a passing fancy, glide
And mar thine image for a moment, Love,
Within my heart, it glides and passes by;
But thou art, Love, mine own abiding sky,
More undisturbed not faithfuller than I.

AUTUMN IN IRELAND

CALM falls the evening: lo! yon delicate ash,
Whose smooth grey bole dark mossy tufts emboss,
Gloats with full foliage in the mellow light,
Each slim leaf dainty dabbling in the glow
And dallying with shadow subtly fine;
While underneath, thin shadow of the tree
Branches upon a slope of lawn greengold
Soft vague as veins meander, and allows
A flow of gleam with gracious whim to stray
About it gentle, yielding light-bubble.
The foliage is paling yellowing
And sheds to-day an amber scattering
Upon the grass as if reflected there.

Below the lawn a billowy sweep of wood
Pours to a glen and fills it fair and far
With undulating topaz, chrysolite,
Whose fervour quickens into ember-fire
Anon or silent burn of tarnished gold,
Into the hue wherewith the robin's breast

Glows now in autumn perched in yonder ash
And ruffling his full throat with melody.

Yon billowy leafage-river seems to pour
And gather from afar insensibly,
Where those vast mountains shadowy upheave
Misted, uncertain, bathed in molten pearl,
Robed in mild light of sweep magnificent
With luminous folds of blue gloom interchanged,
Yet through the heavenly vesture half-betrayed
Their native tones of sombre olive-green,
Rustbrown, or tint of the yew's inner rind.
Behold yon kingly form with storm-beaten
Yet dauntless everlasting rugged face
Over huge shoulder of his brother there!
The far-off mountain purples now with eve,
Yields, melts his proud and stern solidity
To vaporous amethyst that seems to poise,
And brood on mingling with unbodied light.
Anon he looks a vast anemone
Translucent steeped in a clear sea of air,
An air how supple soft and fathomless
Enshrining all, here molten chrysolite,
The inner hue of bursting chestnut sheaths
What time the chestnut drops from leaf to leaf,
There heaven for souls of vanished violets;
Wherein a crescent moon swims tilted high
On end shell-frail, a shallop half submerged.

Calm falls the evening, tender every tone
The mild air pillows; only now and then
Some flitting bird with irrepressible
And innocent bliss brims over in the leaves,
Song fragile fitful as the fitful gleam
Of silken rainbow gossamer at hand
A freckled spider swings from leaf to leaf.
Such voices, and the hushed-with-distance call
Of yonder torrent in the wooded glen,
These only haunt the tranquil-hearted air,
Spirits benign congenial unto it.
While I upon the moss extended lie,
A fairy fir-forest of mazy moss,
Noting some metal-sharded insect thrid
Their labyrinths, and over the frail growth
Of shamrock tiny, or fungus coral-red.

I know ye mountains! tell what hollow lone
Or stern rocksteep of yours defies me long!
I love ye all, love communing with all,
Courting fair deadly face of danger, queen
Among ye—timorous tepid-soulèd men
Know not the fierce delight of meeting her
With blanching cheek and loudly thumping heart
Yet with teeth set, and will unconquerable—
Beautiful spirit, playmate of the storm!
Hard by the eagle's eyrie, when the eagle
Sweeps brooding o'er it dauntless and unmoved

For all the rush of hurricane and scud
Of torn grey cloudrack, poised on wing sublime;
What time blind rain leaves slippery the stalks
Of heather and bilberry in crevices
Of giddy granite precipice, and scarce
For drifting mist I see the rowan beads
Or holly berries, clutching at their stems.

And ah! what glories, secret treasuries
Of beauty and delight we come upon,
Fresh, unfamiliar, where the gaze profane
Of vulgar and unsympathising eyes
Hath never fallen, blighting, tarnishing;
Unbreathed upon, unfingered as a flower
Fresh budded from its sheath, impearled with morn!
How light, how buoyant, all your breezes blow
Ye mountains; how we bound upon your heath!
For illness, with the fretting cares of life,
Unhealthful toil with books, and weary thought
Heaving through waste and wandering seas of doubt,
Hungering with unfathomable want;
Yea even the burden of some deadlier grief;
All these like fevered dreams we fling from us,
Sipping the sparkle of your liberal air!
And now though, wounded climbing in your crags,
Awhile I may not move, my spirit roves
Rejoicing still, while I serene as you
Lie lapped like you in tranquil-waning light!

And thou fierce torrent in the wooded glen!
How often have I watched thee from a rock
Hard by yon thunder-waterfall of thine,
Thy crush of waters tawny as the mane
Of some huge lion crashing like a fate
With raucous roar on a dissolving doe,
And foam resurgent vanishing like cloud
'Mid swirl of bright delirious air-bubbles
In splintering agate of the gulf profound,
While fragile froth white, lacelike, delicate,
Frills tremulous the waterworn grey stone,
Ever blown out, and ever anon relit—
Till in the spume some shadow seems to flit;
Nay! solid thing of life, that unaware
Leaps to my startled vision, leaps in air,
Along the flashing cataract, a fish,
A salmon opal-flanked and mottled fine
His back with shifting purple, to subside
In the seethe baffled yet abide his time.

Ah! splendid torrent, hast thou ne'er a soul,
Art thou no god as men were wont believe?
If not a god, yet verily and full
Pulses in thee the universal God!
Doth not thy full triumphant rush of life
Inevitably leap up into me,
Aching and thrilling inarticulate
Till it can break in me to consciousness,

To its own worship, love, and sympathy?
In solitude I blend my voice with thine,
Shouting for brotherhood and fellowship!
Insanely lust headlong to flash with thee,
Or long to plunge, O lover! in thy pools
Shadowy, fathomless, contemplative,
Dyed of the peat deep coffee; fury-spume
Indolent starring, clinging at the rock,
Gray crag empurpled, hollowed-under, cloven
With such long violent importunity."

Lo! where the listless foam-fleck on the main
'Mid-current dallies, seeming motionless;
Visibly now astir smooth slides along
Yon oily waterlapse; glides giddily
Anon to where, volumed like solid glass,
The flood slips eager into the abyss,
Fired with a parting sunkiss, passionate—
To wander far, now strenuous now calm,
Dreamy and listless under all the dense
Impleachèd greenery of mossy wood,
Twirling sere leaves, umbrageous and cool,
Now smoke-cairngorm, now shallower jasper clear,
Smiling when Day puts by the leaves to look
And variegate with limpid tortoiseshell.

THE GRANDMOTHER'S STORY

THIS afternoon I promised I would hear
That story from the poor old lady near;
So, coming to the cottage there aloft
That creepered stands within its little croft
A stone's throw from the road, roofed in with thatch
I neared the garden-wicket, clicked the latch,
Passed through sweet-william flowers and holly-
hocks,
Straw-plaited hives with bees in humming flocks;
Knocked and within found waiting me to greet
A slight grey woman finely-featured, sweet,
Yet clear and firm of aspect, simple, neat;
About her shoulders over the serge gown,
Though it was warm, a worsted cape was thrown—

'You must forgive me if I weary you,
For I am getting very old, you know;
I shall be seventy come Martinmas—
Swift flies the current of our years that pass!

Well I remember, 'twas a happy day;
We had persuaded him the holiday
At home to spend, and take the weans to play
With Mary and myself among the fern
In Epping Forest, when the blazing burn
(The summer you may mind was hot and dry)
Should cool assuaged from evening drawing nigh.
And John he drove our grey nag in the cart;
Ah! how they teased, the little ones, to start!
You know the beautiful tall beechen trees
Nigh to the old toll-gate that was—a breeze
Blew cool among them, and the lights and shades
Seemed merry as the children in the glades.
Some cows were standing paunch-deep in the pool,
A rough dull-coated clumsy cart-horse, cool
Bathing his thick fore-fetlocks only, let,
After a draught, the water from his wet
Lips either side pour streaming sleepily.
The children watched him, and the goslings nigh,
A second brood downed yellow, with some geese,
And nibbling sheep shorn of their woolly fleece.
John never seemed, I thought, more cheerfullike
And kindly—it was then we saw the shrike
(We call it butcher-bird), and then he followed
With Ned the eldest, where an elm is hollowed,
The mill-like tapping of a woodpecker——'
At this I questioned, interrupting her,
Doubting how far the dear old dame would err:

'So it was then Mary began to ail?'
'Nay' she replied, 'mayhap a little pale
Silent and weary she had seemed at first,
But into spirits rapturous she burst
When playing with the children in the wood:
To see their romps! I felt it did me good.
I recollect the little sister saying
(At hide-and-seek the younger two were playing)
"Now, Tom, I'm going to hide by yonder tree
Among the fern, and you must look for me
When you shall hear me calling out cuckoo!"
And then away the little toddler flew
To bury her wee face where covert grew
Of marestail and of fern, a forest small
Within the forest, taller than them all;
But bless you! she was three year old and she
Never surmised that anyone could see
If but her eyes were shut, and so she stole
Ere calling but halfway within a hole
Between some fronds that bordered open grass,'
And all might see the blue frock of the lass,
Each bare leg tiny and her little shoon.'

This I foresaw would not be ended soon,
So gently coaxing her toward the goal
I spoke again—'Well, I had gone to stroll
Not far,' the grandmother resuming spoke,
'When I saw Mary coming near the oak
Where I was resting, holding baby fast

Hushing and singing to it as she passed,
Yet strangely breaking off into a prayer
Wild incoherent, as of strong despair,
Between the snatches of her lullaby:
Conceive the shock it gave me; plainly I
Heard what she muttered, "John is gone with HER!
Little he cares about the woodpecker."

'I knew the husband all too often failed
In duty to my Mary, since she ailed
Now many a day from harshness of the man;
Albeit in sooth the malady foreran
In buried members of our family
(My fear foreboded her not wholly free,
Even from a girl); she wept unceasingly
These later days indeed; nor most I think
From his brutality to her in drink,
But for his wanton doings with the other:
Gentle and true, poor thing, she could not smother
Hatred of that lewd woman handsome base,
Who daily more encroached upon her place
In her own house as in his fickle heart.
And yet what smote her with the deadly smart
Was this one day that made so fair a start
Playing her false, betraying her to pain,
She wellnigh foolish counted on the wane,
Because he had been kinder for awhile;
The woman for a month gone many a mile:

And he was gentler to the children small
As to herself—That evening most of all
Kind he appeared and cheery—happiness
Of dim-remembered years came nigh to bless,
When they twain and the child beneath the sod,
Their pretty first-born, seemed alone with God,
Happy as those in heaven.—Sudden fell
On her fresh-budding hope the blast from hell,
Loathsome, abhorred, familiar too well.
The hated gleam she saw among the fern
Of *her* red drapery; which made her turn
White cold, atremble, as the children told,
Rising from playing with them in the gold
Of silverweed and birdsfoot, fixing look
Intently staring on the path he took
Among thick hazels and low-blooming bramble:
But Tom, poor innocent, moved on a ramble
That very way, spying a foxglove yonder,
(Such a tall spire of spotted bells, a wonder!)
When swift and shrill she screamed that he should
stay:
"Stay here! you dare not! will you ne'er obey?
Not nigh that woman"—then she caught the child,
The little baby, with a gesture wild,
Straining it to her, hurrying to me,
Muttering singing incoherently.'

She paused as weary, shedding even tears,

Though all was over many many years;
So I besought her not to tell me more
Nor idly stir the drowsy griefs of yore.

'I like to tell you, sad indeed yet sweet,
Going all over, but 'tis hardly meet
Much longer to detain you, and indeed
For what remains there is but little need.
Terrible journey home! sad interval
Till I all faint, fearing for what might fall
On those wee children with the mother dazed,
(Frightful to see her fondling baby crazed!)
On thorns both day and night, in anguish went
With my poor Mary where she must be sent,
The Doctor said; where skilful dealing would
Be likeliest, he thought, to work for good,
If aught could cure, by severing her ways
From all that mixed slow poison with her days.

'Well very soon, as I expected, he
Brought home the woman, telling me that she
Would cherish well the babes unmothered all,
Since me myself my proper cares recall
Home to the farm—those days you know I kept
House for my son unwed, yet often stept
Over to Mary's; it was very near;
And to my heart her babes were very dear.

'But need there was for me in Chelmsford town

Soon after far from them to bide; and flown
Were nigh four months before I could again
Behold my children, howsoever fain.
And then indeed it made my heart to ache
Seeing my babes—you know I could not take
Them home, 'twas all impossible, but oh!
They had not got their mother, don't you know.
A mother's love for her own little child,
There's nought so strong, so holy, undefiled!
Rosy and happy they would always look;
They were her first thought, and I seldom took
A walk their way, but I was sure to find
Her at wee shirt or frock, or romping kind
Tireless with one or all; save when she plied
Her other household tasks—(for she but lied,
The other woman, when she spread abroad
Her duties to her husband were ignored
By Mary, though she made him think the same)—
But as to them, the children, when I came
I found them all uncared-for, pining, pale;
I was quite sure their very food must fail,
Unwashed, unkempt, ragged and slatternly,
Poor darlings cherished late so tenderly!
And with her always bitter, sharp and cross,
They lost their childish spirits; what a loss
For little children! Oft I found them crying:
One cowed, sly, joyless; peevish or defying
Another grew, and far more quarrelsome—

Starved of fair equal dealing, all that home
With loving watchful service can provide,
Starved in their poor hearts, and as ill-supplied
Small growing bodies with the needful food—
I used to think that no one ever could
Maltreat, or even neglect, a little child,
Enslaving us with sheerest weakness mild,
Conquering with designless impotence,
Pleading with all resistless eloquence
Of humble sweet uplooking eyes and sense
Of utter helplessness, implicit trust
In you for all—could any woman thrust
An innocent away, who made appeal
With pleading shiftless geste, if she could feel?
Had she a heart deep in it must he steal,
She not unmindful that herself once throve
Frail pensioner upon a mother's love!
Seeing the little girl alas! I thought,
How but two years ago I saved and bought
Some wooden animals and other toys
For her, and how quite weary with her joys
One day I found her at my Mary's—there
Was little Nelly in the cushion-chair
In Mary's arms, who dared nor breathe nor stir,
Though cramped and numb for fear of waking her:
Unaware dozing off to quiet sleep,
Her dimpled, waxen little fingers keep
A small white wooden cock, her favourite toy,

Rosily loosely locked upon the joy—
Open moist coral mouth, and flushing cheek!
Where were they now? timid and wan and weak
I found her—but to make my story short,
Trustworthy news one day to me was brought
That John was gone, had left both house and home,
And none knew where; but over the sea-foam
Somewhere abroad, mayhap Australia,
The folk surmised: "His little children are
Left to that woman," thus the neighbour said
"She will not keep them now the father's fled,
But they must go into the workhouse nigh;
You cannot take them"—how in sooth could I?
(It seems that John and she had quarrelled sore,
Yet from his winnings she secured a store)
So by the help of our good clergyman
I carried out reluctantly the plan—
I think it was a hard and cheerless life:
One soon gave over the unequal strife;
Harshness, neglect, poor food, too strong for her,
Poor little Nelly died—so happier!
The baby, that, you know, had died before.
But for the others, Tom and Ned, they bore
Up against all; and when I found the leisure—
Hoping to give my poor lost child a pleasure,
And because Doctor Thomson said it might
Possibly set her wildered reason right
To see the children—on a holiday

I took them to their mother, far away.

'Ah! what a change—her scanty hair was grey,
Late raven-black; her face was gaunt and drawn,
Once blithe and fresh and rosy as the dawn.
She knew us, yes she knew us, them and me;
Yet not as figures from the past, you see,
Blent with old scenes, at most but vaguely linked;
Rather with that fire-atmosphere all tinct
She breathed, blent with her tortured wildered being—
Hell, with but Death to slide the bolt for fleeing!
She scared the little ones, holding them close
Embraced for long: and once indeed there rose
Some of the Past faint blurred in front of her—
"Nelly and baby, you must bring them here:
Well are they?—John would have come earlier
To see me in my misery, but he
Must be long dead—I mind their telling me!"

. . . 'Well, have I more to tell? The boys are here.
If Ned could get some situation near—
He's old enough—you hear them shouting now.
They and my son's three slung from bough to bough
There in the apple orchard late a swing—
They let me have the boys out for a fling
Of pleasure now and then—they're very well—
They like the dipping; why, I cannot tell;

It turns me giddy looking—well, the young
I know! and there's the terrier barking strong;
When Neddy runs to push, he always will;
Poor dog, some day he's sure to come to ill!
I think that you can see them if you look;
The casement is ajar; 'tis nigh the brook
And gillyflowers—my apples will be rare
I fear this year, they do not promise fair.
'Tis nearly time the children came to tea,
And I must make it: where's the gooseberry
I promised little Mary?
Must you go?
You will be always welcome, Sir, you know!'

ANOTHER VERSION

'YET in his prime, of promise very full,
'Truly a grievous fate!
'Many sweet years along life's way to cull
'Young wedded folk may wait;
'They lived in one another 'tis averred'—
Pity! yet I know more than they have heard.

He and the lady strolled into the wood
Where rose and bramble marry,
Nigh buried in the full fern as they stood,
While nightingales yet tarry,
A film of glinting silver on the deep
Green fronds that under in mild fire steep.

What silent sunlight-gushes in the grass,
Rich-breathing oily fern,
And sapful herbage flowering as they pass,
How the long-purples burn!
Languid the air with foamy elder-bloom,
Blue flies in shining summer wheel and boom.

Exuberant young lavish life of all
  Their senses overflowed;
Noting some leafage-softened sunlight fall
  Where skins of satin glowed,
Thitherward thrilling hands of each instole,
And eye sought eye, and lip sought lip, for goal.

Oh! they had lightly dared the perilous slope
  Smooth turf impending over,
Dallying playful; now with ne'er a hope
  Their guardian angels hover;
His heart love-loyal yet to one at home,
Drugged with sense-fumes he palters there with doom!

For search him through, no thought nor love you find;
  In such a heat they sleep;
One luscious hot dissolving sense doth blind
  Fuse all their powers and steep;
So bees men stupefy within the hive
Are reft of honey while they cease to live.

What angel may avert the triple loss
  Of three poor human souls?
But while they lie, in wood-sorrel across
  From one of nearest boles
Flits flustering a brown bird from her nest,
By them shy startled in her innocent rest;

And troubling both nigh brings the woman to,
So half awakening him
By her coy shrinking; but they startle through
Now, for the silence dim
Ruffles with rustling very near their nook:
A girl with her wood-bundle while they look

Passes unseeing them, but as she goes
Lightly she hums an air
That stabs him as the dearest one of those
His bride in days that were
Was wont to sing; she fades among the leaves—
When lo! a shriek the wood's green quiet cleaves.

Breathless they listen till it shrills once more
Anguished, imploring, wild;
He hurries eager from the woodland floor,
And now behold a child—
The girl three brutal men are dragging nigh;
One kneels upon her frail form murderously.

'Quick! help her!' cries the lady; 'they are three;
'Nay rather let us fly!'
Fierce unaware by him assailed they flee,
Nor will the maiden die;
But in the strife was dealt to *him* the blow
That stained him crimson and that laid him low.

Yet he confided to me that he chose
  Even in the moment's rush,
If this were Death, the friend, to clasp him close,
  And so avert the crush
Inevitable of a soul's undoing,
Whelming two loved ones in its own fell ruin.

So leaning on the faithful breast he waned,
  Safe now from rending it,
Nor either gentle nature had sustained
  Death from his fury-fit—
The selfish man die victim to his *love!*
Warm tears of bliss or sorrow shall it move?

CRADLE SONG FOR SUMMER

I

Sleep, my childie, sleep
I' the hush of evening deep,
Gone the last long-lingering beam
From where the tender violets dream
With closèd eyes by the woodland stream:
Sleep, my childie, sleep.

II

Sleep, my childie, sleep;
Fresh dews of twilight creep
Through folded blooms of eglantine,
Speedwell and harebell and woodbine;
Yet open the large white bugles shine:
Sleep, my childie, sleep.

III

Sleep, my childie, sleep.
Now dewy planets creep
Through skies of fading purple-rose,
Yon elm full-foliaged overflows
With those love-songs the blackbird knows:
Sleep, my childie, sleep.

IV

Sleep, my childie, sleep;
Now drowsy birdies keep
More silence; rare the cuckoo's note,
The dove's low plaint hath ceased to float,
Sweet breezes flutter in and out:
Sleep, my childie, sleep.

V

Sleep, my childie, sleep;
The skimming moth may sip
Our bower's honeysuckle bloom
That lavish breathes a rare perfume,
I hear the velvet hornet boom:
Sleep, my childie, sleep.

VI

Sleep, my childie, sleep;
The shepherd counts his sheep,
I hear the cattle browse and chew,
Afield the click of ball that flew
Bat-smitten and the boy's halloo:
Sleep, my childie, sleep.

VII

Sleep, my childie, sleep;
Where meadow grass is deep,
Nor yet lies heaped the fragrant hay,
The crake is calling, or away
Where the corn mellows every day,
Sleep, my childie, sleep.

VIII

Sleep, my childie, sleep;
Yon primrose skies must keep
Some chimè of faint and faëry bells
Whose ebb and flow of tidal swells
Or close or open aërial cells!
Sleep, my childie, sleep.

IX

Sleep, my childie, sleep;
The summer breath can steep
All sights and sounds in hallowed rest;
Beneath, far setting toward the West,
Rich seas of pasture swoon to mist:
Sleep, my childie, sleep.

X

Sleep, my childie, sleep;
Rare doth the swallow sweep
Now lilied pools for dragon-flies,
Nor orange mouths that gape supplies
While the dam greets with twittering cries:
Sleep, my childie, sleep.

XI

Sleep, my childie, sleep;
Still soft the marten-cheep
Below yon eaves from rustic nest
With moss and bents and feathers prest
Lined warm for many a downy breast:
Sleep, my childie, sleep.

XII

Sleep, my childie, sleep;
Four callow fledglings peep
No more, but nestle to the wing,
Whose darkness ne'er to them can bring
Doubt of the parent's sheltering!
Sleep, my childie, sleep.

XIII

Sleep, my childie, sleep;
Our earthly clouds must weep
Their rain upon thy stainless brow;
I only pray my child may know
Her Father's wing those shadows throw;
Then ever rest and sleep!

LEONARDO'S CHRIST

I

One came from forth the unquiet city glare;
Brought heart unhallowed, hard and bitter thought,
Dark pride, this passing world's vain restless care;
Which all his soul to unquiet fever wrought
With inarticulate moan for rest, for love:
Trod unaware the venerable hall
Where day kneels veiled—hushed gazers dare not move—
Where that grand spirit traced upon the wall
A scene all deathless, though the flaking colour fall.

II

Came and was smitten and bowed, like him who rode
Of old so hot and proud till unaware
The vision of a lowly Jesus glowed
More strong than midday might on him to bear
Both soul and frame to earth, there silent laid
To list those clear sad loving accents say
'Why persecute me, Saul?'—Yon figure said
The like, he deemed, this weary one to-day,
Yon midmost Form apart i' the pictured Life array.

III

For there mid faces sharp new pain distressed,
Each with his own life-look and features' play,
At that last meal sat One from whom the rest,
It seemed, withdrew, though but for grieved dismay,
Even now withdrew to leave him all alone,
Yet not alone the Father being nigh:
For He the spell of gloom about them thrown
From shadowing trouble near broke ominously,
And spake with low distinct yet quivering tone
'Of you shall one betray Me, chosen for my own.'

IV

And through yon faded scaling colours gazed,
As through the veil of ages passed away,
And through heart-mist the wanderer's sight which hazed,
Those drooping eyes of melancholy ray,
That worn sad face with selfless calm Divine,
Pathetic air and gesture; all again
Spake those sad words—to *him*—'O friend of mine
'Wilt thou betray? my love did never wane;
'I told heart secrets to thee, led thee, soothed thy pain!'

V

They ranged or grouped along the dusky stone
Of pictured chamber wall, the Lord doth sit
His head relieved against the tender tone
Of landscape, far and deep light softening it,

As ripening afternoon is wont to do
In yonder clime with kindly mellowing haze.
To steep rude earth in his own glory-glow
Grows gently sad the sun's triumphant blaze;
To near our world's chill mists he dims in coming low.

VI

An emblem of His love, whose spirit shines
Like yonder sun, calm pure and infinite,
But through sweet law of its own life declines
Toward our blind heart-broken world, His light
While glorifying shrouded low and sad
Mid vapours dank of uncongenial sin
From false faint hearts, souls fevered hot and mad
For pelf, power, fame; about them pale and thin
Spurned shivering poor, the weepers round their darling dead.

VII

Day wore to eve from glad upspringing morn:
His day wore on from that all glorious prime
When, holding Mary's hand, His steps were drawn
A little Child, at day-break, evening time,
To that near hollow where the cool well lies
And women with their pitchers congregate;
Wore on from when the expanding youth for rise
Of sun mid Nazarean hills would wait
With God-communing soul in dark unfathomed eyes.

VIII

Or lying where some homeless mountain air
Strays sighing through sweet thyme and russet growth
Faint purpled, watched sun's bloodred orb from there
Sink in the ensanguined sea, suffusing both
Wide sky and earth with his own dying glow;
Dark Carmel's promontory warmed to red,
Where long ago God's prophet did desire
From Heaven the flame, which fell while shrieked and bled
False priests of Baal: all burned as with heart of fire.

IX

His Spirit grew into the mighty thought
Of countrymen, of all the world, at strife,
The slaves of Evil, to be wisdom taught
Less by wise precept than a selfless life:
His heart throbbed yearning to embrace the whole:
He longed to be among them; one by one
The features of his giant fabric stole
Forth from the gloom upon Him—like yon sun
He saw His dying Love the world in glory roll.

X

All Carmel haunts of prophet, priest or sage,
The light of His self-sacrifice illumes;
That ancient Love which breathes from age to age
Life into all; yet newborn youth assumes

From now a Man concentrates rays Divine
In His own soul and life; so floods the world!
He, focus of our light, shall ever shine
Till we, too wise for Love, His flag have furled;
Or mightier Sun arise to shame Love's pale decline!

XI

But shadow deepens now toward the close:
His spirit darkens with the coming doom,
While they in whom his heart had found repose
Of sympathy in good fold close the gloom;
For He who pours His very being forth
Divinely rich and pure for these must hear
These even now, so nigh the end, in wrath
Dispute pre-eminence: while deadly near
Looms Peter's base denial,—each one's broken troth!

XII

Dark, darker yet that anguish 'neath the tree:
By torchlight lo! the ghastly traitor's kiss:
On to that inmost depth of agony
When God—'tis still the Father doing this—
His own hand draws before those filming eyes
To hide Himself—there in man's lowest deep
Back-thrusting sin's untasted cup He dies:
The blank dead face of that Eternal Sleep
His coming wakes to flush with solemn grand surprise!

XIII

And ever since that awful joy hath dwelt
Upon the dark long-dreaded face of Death;
And ever since those dreary regions melt
In His self-sacrificing sunset breath:
But now it is the shadowing doom that weighs
His spirit down: He gives the bread and wine,
That they and multitudes His soul surveys
Of men unborn in ever lengthening line
May feed upon His love through all the circling days—

XIV

Ah! passive hand, in life but raised to save,
They use thee cold to strike the wanderers low!
Ah! silent voice, all silent in the grave,
Thou tenderest breath of love in ear of Woe!
Thou guardian wing must speed their shafts of scorn,
Of hard harsh pride—O long-enduring Lord,
Death holds not *Thee*! Thou 'from the dead firstborn,'
Arise, and wield once more the flaming sword,
That ne'er smote but the proud; lift once more them that mourn!

A CONFESSION

(Scene, *a Prison Cell.* Prisoner *to Clergyman loq.*)

'I should have known she never could be mine:
What was in me to hold a woman's love?
She, in the bloom of her transcendent youth,
And I not even young and never fair,
Nor like some brave or brilliant in wit.
Yet I adored her—ah! she trod upon
So many gay silk cloaks obeisant laid
'Neath her queen feet, 'twas condescension deep
For her to walk upon my garment worn.
How should she stay to ponder the gallants
Had much such raiment stored in cedar-presses
And lavish strewed for other feet than hers,
While this poor cloak I laid for her, this love
Of mine, it was my all, and all for her?
Yet, had I felt her shudder as she gave
Herself to me! but sweet she seemed and bland
As ever—well I knew she could not love
As I loved her, I never looked for that—
So very little had contented me.

Attar of roses,—only a drop of it
Outperfumes floods of common essences.
But she averred—I see her sitting now
Broidering silk and gold in delicate kid
With dainty fingers, lifting, ah! those eyes
Soft as horizons in the summer time,
Answering in that low sweet tone of hers—
That long her heart had been my own; she feared
I cared not for her since I did not speak.
And I, who hardly dared to lift mine eyes,
But stammered shuffling awkwardly before her
Praying her leave me but a little hope,
Thus caught up unaware to paradise!
First I was stunned incredulous with joy,
And broke to foolish tears like some big child,
Shy touching her; and then because she smiled
So placid, half amused I fancied, fear
She might be sporting with me struck me faint.
I said it, but she kissed away my doubt;
And yet I felt a secret want, a chill,
Through all her kindness—nay, it must be so
Ever I whispered to my yearning heart;
She loves, even she, loves me, and only me.
I cannot fathom what she wanted now—
Oh could it be the paltry manor-house?
Was she not sure I would have laid the whole,
All toil-worn earnings of my father's life
And mine, if she had hinted what she craved,

All at her feet? Ah! could it e'er behove,
Reaching for bubble vanities like these,
To tread upon a fond man's living heart?
But they who warped her gentle sinless soul,
Trailed earthward its young shoot assiduous
Lest it should Godward grow as it desired,
Respectable, smooth, pious, and accurst,
They are to blame—not thou, my murdered love!
Well I was heavy, taciturn, I know,
No meet companion for a sylph like her.
I went about my work; from morn till night
I toiled for her and for the little ones.
Two babes were ours, a little girl and boy.
I thought of little but my work and them,
And in the evenings jaded with my toil
From the black town preoccupied I came.
How sweet the faces of my darlings then!
Yet cares were on me, care for my beloved.
Such sordid topics could not be for her
To share the weary burden of with me,
Who lived for music and embroidery,
Deft tracing tasteful ornamental work
For some bazaar or cyphers intricate,
Chatting with friends or dancing at a ball.
I dull and weary sitting in the room,
Only a few feet far from her in flesh,
In spirit felt her myriad leagues away—
She had so little heed for what absorbed

Me more and more, and weighed me down in dust.
And I, alas! in my armchair I slept
While she was playing brilliant passages
Or quavering through the last new opera
By Verdi. Hard she seemed to me and cold:
Contemptuous familiarity,
That rust of love marriage may generate,
Enhanced with her by lowly estimate
(Too well deserved) of my so homely wit,
I felt in her demeanour shivering;
Sluggish and dull to her aërial games,
A mayfly with a crawling snail for mate.

'But once I, forcing my slow brain to think
Of something she would like that I could bring
Home for her from the town, had sacrificed
A scheme long cherished, and so bought for her
A necklace I had heard her longing for:
And then I think—yes, Sir, I do believe
She loved me when I took it from the case—
Not the bright bauble, but the man who gave!
She looked and flung herself upon me, Sir,
Tears in her sun-laugh: "I was very good;
She wished she were a better wife to me."
With choking voice I only made reply,
"You do then love me: is it true indeed?"
"Oh, John!" she faltered hiding her in me:
And then I blessed my desolate barren life

For holding in its weary waste of sand
This blessèd moment: here at home you know
Lightly we value our abundant wells;
But once I heard a traveller from the East
Describe a desert march interminable
Through scorching sand—the rapture of the drone
Of distant waterwheels upon his ear,
The cool and liquid flash upon his eye
Of spilling water from revolving jars
Sleeked with acacia shadows as they stirred!

'Yet even in such a trifle I was slow
Shrewdly to guess what thing she fancied most.
My mind was smothered in the moil accurst,
And if she asked me, that was not the same.
But now I forced myself to cross her whim
Many a time for fear of what might chance
In ruin of my fortune waning fast.
Once hinting somewhat of my fear to her,
She but replied I looked the gloomy side,
The Bible said despondency was sin;
Business she hated, could not comprehend.
Therefore I plodded on, hiding with care
The twin-woes feeding ever insatiable
Upon the vitals of my tortured breast.

'Well, sir, among her gay acquaintances
Who played and sang and chatted often with her

Was that—the person whom I need not name.
Handsome and gay and brilliant I believe:
I used to think, I owned it to myself,
Nature had moulded them for one another,
Not her for me—and if not her, not any!
Who should be mine in yonder world or this
If not my darling? but I trusted her,
Utterly blindly then I trusted her.
Yes, I was blind, old dotard, a fond fool;
(But love *is* blind), until a "friend sincere,"
Hinted a warning: I indignant flushed,
Plucked forth the barb and flung it in his face.
But I suppose it rankled unaware:
I caught myself at hovering nigh the pair
With wistful eyes, till once I somewhat saw
Which startled me to faintness with the shock
Of half-incredulous wonder and dismay.
But then a horrid fascination drew
Me to peer closer—many a trifle now
Fraught with keen anguish to my sickened heart.

'One afternoon, I well remember it,
Our little girl was playing with my beard,
Climbed frolicsome on father's mountain knee,
In a sweet arbour of our shaven lawn,
A summer evening; and her mother came
Round on us unaware, and sitting nigh
How beautiful she looked, the sun upon her,

Through green festooning of the lush woodbine
Sleeking her curls and dainty waist and foot!
The child cried, "Let me go, I want mamma;"
I murmured in my agony of spirit,
Still yearning to her, bleeding for her sin
And treachery, nor holding it full-proven,
Half to myself and half for her to hear,
"Your darling lovely naughtiest mamma!"
She wincing looked with such a scared white look
I see it now, and shudder seeing it;
For ah! there was no ruth, no lingering scent
Of what might once have been a love for me;
It was mere scare; it took away my hope,
I think—not all—hope heaved and fluttered yet.
The child with poor dazed face betwixt us two
Said piteous, "Mamma, you are not naughty;"
Yet at her terrible white abstracted look
Returned and hid her face in me and cried.
But soon the mother rose, and sitting by me
Took my cold hand and feigning to be gay
Questioned me "what I meant? what could I mean?
She thought I must be dreaming, not myself,
At least she craved to know my secret thought.
What had she done? She would explain it all
If I would tell her;" but I looked her through,
And shut my lips; I could not say it out;
Yet tried to smile (I doubt a withered smile),
And passed my hand athwart my throbbing brow,

And stammered I believed that I was ill,
And she had seemed so cold of late to me.
Of course she probed me little satisfied;
But I was silent: no proof positive
Was mine: how bring myself to charge disgrace,
Dishonour upon the idol of my life?
Preoccupied that evening she appeared,
Yet strove to seem affectionate and kind,
Attentive and considerate for me.
There was a certain pleading in her eyes
And movement bringing me my cup of tea
That touched me in my stunned bewilderment,
Recalling soft the blessed year of trust
When I lay childlike pillowed on her breast,
Marvelling God should lend His seraph to me.
You've seen a huge trunk lying prone and bare
With sappy layers concentric where 'twas hewn
Grown dry and soiled, yet through the wrinkled bark
Will creep some budding twigs at breath of spring;
So my heart budded at her look and touch.

'But then there lowers the nightmare horrible—
Well, in the dark, Sir, when we lay in bed
Abrupt she blurted her confession out—
Not tremulous sobbing, weeping tears of blood,
Ah! no—in hesitating tones she spoke;
Yet slow and measured, in deliberate choice
It seemed of phrase appropriate, as though

A task oppressive weary burdensome
Herself or some third person imposed on her.
"Something had lain upon her conscience long:
She saw I knew it, had been near the telling:
She was about to pray me to forgive;
And it was very wicked to deceive
Me who had been so very good to her—
Yet when I knew the whole she trusted I,
Tender and generous-hearted, would forgive."
Ah! Sir, to cling convulsive to a tuft
Over a precipice and feel it give!
To lean secure with all your soul upon
One bosom, and for it to let you down
Crumbling to dust, a bosom of the dead!
When she began to speak I now recall
I shook as with an ague turning cold.
God! did she fancy that my heart was wood,
So leisurely she fixed and screwed within it
The cruel bradawl of her measured words?
Mere phrases of remorse conventional,
No love! scant pity—weak and stupid I
Docile and generous and submissive to her—
Did her indifference to me and contempt
Go length of holding me an idiot mild
With not a man's heart or intelligence?
Because I could not trill duets with her,
Or spin her sentimental versicles,
Illuminate her prayer-book, almanac,

Because I was not smooth and rose-coloured
Like any woman, nor Adonis-limbed,
Was that a proof I had no power to feel,
That I, just God! was not a living man,
Whate'er the fashion's popinjay might be?
A human life spilt shivered at her feet
And tingling with blest sense of scope fulfilled
Exhaling there its costly fragrancy!
Such a devotion even God in Heaven
Accounts no refuse, claiming for His own.
It was not she to spurn me—it was God!
Nay, but He uses for our punishment
Those very idols we have dared enthrone!

'There I lay suffering, all her cruel words
Cutting me keen like flying spikes of ice,
Until when she avowed (more self-composed
And calm with talk) abysms of treachery
My ghastliest suspicion never plumbed,
I think, I verily believe, that reason
Fell swooning from her seat, and then the devil
Took full possession of my tortured soul—
I rose up a mere maniac with blind
Lust to crush out the thing that tortured me:
My fingers clutched her delicate soft throat,
And tightened, tightened, like a vice in it.
The paroxysm past I sank again
Exhausted on the pillow all confused.

How long I lay I know not, but the truth
Of what had chanced shaped horrible itself
Slowly before me in the lurid gloom.
That moment how I hated her—yet soon
I fell to wondering why she lay so still.
I only knew I had been violent
With her, yet not too brutal, even now
I hoped relenting—then I listened intent—
A sickening fear pressed suddenly upon me!
Why does she lie so quiet that her breath
I cannot hear! I have not *killed* her—no—
Impossible! she means to frighten me
For my unmanly violence but now.
After awhile I shyly touched her brow—
Great Heaven! it is clammy, it is cold:
I shudder, daring not to feel again.
I cannot, will not credit *that* can be.
I kill her! I! Cruel to frighten me,
Cruel again—I call her under breath,
Then louder, tenderly, and soft again
I breathed her blessed name—without reply.

. . . . .

I will not add another sin to this,
I thought: my death is sure remaining here.
I expiate my crime before the world,
Then follow her—we meet before the Just.
But I went cowering to the window nigh—
Wherefore I know not—it was early dawn;

Our casement was ajar; some birds awoke
In our near trees; one lark broke up the grey—
The dawning of our honeymoon's first night
When I had crept thus to enjoy the dawn
And soft air fragrant with the scent of hay!
(Only last year we played in yonder hay
She and I with the little ones together).
The cattle couched upon the dewy lawn,
Our near church-spire in quiet chrysolite
Among the waning stars where she is gone—
My darling slept then with her pretty face
In her child-hand, and long I watched her lie—
And now, my God! my love has brought to this
The only thing my love was set upon.
But all I touched I ruined when I touched,
And one long foredoomed failure is my life.
Why was I born? And yet there is a God—
An awkward child my favourite toys I broke,
And boyish games I spoiled wherein I played,
In business ruined others and myself!
I covered up the marred but precious face;
And when they stirred about the house, I called
And told them I had done it, and again
Sat by the darling body, feeling glad
That she and I were now at peace for ever.
The problem so insoluble to me,
The weary problem of this tangled life,
I fingered but to tangle more hopelessly,

Is nigh the solving: I have let it rest:
Nothing can come between us any more.
Tell me, Sir, as a clergyman, your thought.
Sometimes it seems the more I ponder it
That, now the brutal frenzy-fit has passed
From me for ever, and the moment dire
Of her death-anguish passed away from her,
Her spirit, sloughing off the film obscure
Of earth upon her eyes, beholds at last
The man I am, the bottomless abyss
Of all my love for her—from agony
Emergent saw, and seeing loved at last,
The man so loving that he murdered her
At the first shock of feeling that his love,
The priceless treasure of his boundless love,
Lay dropt unseen, unheeded underfoot.
She did not know me, did not understand:
That will be changed there—now her eyes are open,
I think she waits to fall upon my breast
Radiant now with all the love I craved,
Announcing God the loving hath forgiven
Both His poor wildered children who have sinned!'

A CHILD'S FUNERAL

No passer in the strait and dreary road
  By hedgerows dank with rain:
From dusk low clouds the rain unceasing flowed
  And the wind blew amain.

Only a little coffin borne of four
  With two to mourn—none other
Follow as mourners through the windy pour,
  The father and the mother.

A little pall is floating black and white,
  The mourners' faces set
Upon the ground as though they envied quite
  Their lifeless baby pet.

They do not feel the chill and soaking crape;
  But the tilting to and fro
They feel of that cold helpless baby shape
  As the careless bearers go.

Ah! where the gambols of his bounding limbs
Buoyant with springing life?
Sweet light-and-shadow chase of baby whims,
Laughter and tears at strife?

No more again will patter tiny feet
In his bright nursery,
No innocent prattle of his will hinder sweet
The day's dull drudgery.

Ah! pouting of his roselips for a kiss,
And dimpled arms that clung—
Trifles, for him a marvel and a bliss
To name with lisping tongue!

I follow to the little grave at hand,
I hear the griding rope,
And shuffling feet of them that lowering stand,
And those grand words of hope.

The parents look as though the rope did gride
Their sinking hearts about,
As if on them the earth were thrown to hide
And from the light shut out.

But once methinks the mother, raising eyes
At those grand words she hears
Read from the Holy Book to murky skies,
Light breaks behind the tears,

And feeds for her some shy emerging bow:
The father's face I see
Is dark and hopeless, though his spirit know
Divine the mystery.

But he will wind a man's strong arm about
The woman faltering:
They, since their life's wee fire has dwindled out,
For warmth more close will cling.

SONG

'I WENT, DEAR, BY THE BROOK TO-DAY'

I

I WENT, dear, by the brook to-day,
The little brook was dry,
No shoals flash fair in a sunny ray
Shooting the shallow nigh,
Nor silverly clinks the crystal free
As the startled minnows fly.

II

Our one wild apple above the pool
Hath yielded blossoms long
To gleamy water lingering cool,
Birds weary now of song,
No winged blue halcyon flits with glee
Green bulrushes among.

III

Only a teasel moves a flower
And a languid meadowsweet,
Dull leaves are thirsting for a shower,
Blue airs are pale with heat.
Ah! never again by the brook with me
Thy fairy foot may fleet!

IV

There is no water in the brook
Nor any rosy bloom,
Music and rain the leaves forsook—
And thou hast left in gloom
A heart that yearns, O love, to thee
Over the far sea foam.

MINNIE

MINNIE! our Minnie! did I ever tell
About the morning of the day she went?
Knee-deep in marigolds, the sunlight fell
On lilac frock and gold enravelment
Of mistlike hair,
And cherub-fair
Face, with blue eyes of merry wonderment.

She stood as gaily listening intent,
Clapping babe-dimpled hands with tender stroke;
While forward arch her little head she bent,
'That was Papa's voice; it was he that spoke,
'Called "Minnie, dear!"
'I heard him clear'—
No voice but hers the summer stillness woke.

Nay, darling, you mistook; Papa's away,'
I answered, 'far from here across the sea.'
Dreamy she looked; 'Mayhap he came to-day,
'And he has brought some pretty thing for me.
'He called, I know;
'O let me go,
'Mamma, I'm sure he wants me on his knee!'

'He may have called, perchance, from very far;
'Come, dearest, come away, and look for him!'
No sound I heard, and he was in the war;
I wondered at the little maiden's whim.
My musing fell
On Samuel,
The child who thought Eli was calling him.

You know who called him! . . . well, that very night
Our little one lay in her little cot
Dead, scathed with lightning, like an angel white,
Her face unspoiled . . . He would have called her not
Away from me,
Unless that He
Some lovelier thing for His wee lamb had got!

THE TWO FRIENDS

FAST friends at school two maidens grew,
And wintry age still found them true,
Ellen of gentle clinging mould,
And Maud who seemed reserved and cold.
Maud loved to question why and how,
What men are taught all-keen to know,
Yet learned with graceful modesty
And blushed to make some wise reply.
But Ellen, she was formed for love,
More soft than softest airs that move
Instinct with cooings from the grove.
Once only, yet a girl, she loved
A midshipman, who sailed and roved
O'er half the world, but kept as leal
A heart as when he used to kneel
An infant by his mother's side.
Yet he was poor: a guardian's pride
And shallow fondness often urge
Of him who sweeps the alien surge—
And in his lonely nightwatch sees

Her face in phosphor-foam that flees,
But loves yon stars best, for they keep
Blest eyes upon her innocent sleep—
That boys are fickle roaming far,
That greater, wealthier suitors are
Here at her feet—but sensitive
To love as little flowers that give
Their closest secrets to the morn
At his first kiss, and shut forlorn
Their crimson tips when skies are grey,
Where conscience sheds no doubtful ray
This tender woman from her way
Not prayers nor fires may tempt to stray.
And so she waits for weary years;
And since she cannot bend with tears
Hearts warped by worldliness, they hold
A solemn council as they fold,
These lovers with their sacred love,
Who bids them, would they worthy prove,
Forsake the world to follow Him;
So Maud with vision suffused and dim
In part from joy, in part maybe
From some dim hungering jealousy,
Receives the fugitives, whose home
Their home with her shall hence become.
He grows a leader in the state,
While all her life is consecrate
To cheer him wearied oft, and tend

Fair infants God to them may lend.
The sick and poor around her bless
Her grace of human tenderness,
While men, half-hearted foes of wrong,
With her wax chivalrous and strong,
Though worldlings shun with coward sense
Her dauntless front of innocence.
At noble deeds her heart would bound
As a war-horse at the trumpet's sound;
And glories of the earth and air
Her limpid spirit mirrors fair—
Nor only shrines them, since they don
Fresh forms and lovelier every one
From sprouting seedlike in her soul;
Till carols of the Spring-bird roll
From her white throat in human strain
More rare to nature given again;
She feels the blossomed landscape wane
Hued like young wheat-bloom through the boughs
Of foliaged oaks, and placid cows
In lustrous cowslip-meadows lie,
One lapse of light the river nigh;
And lo! such landscapes of our land
Glow new-born 'neath her fairy hand
Creating—even as bees who dive
In flower-sweets their own to hive.
But when the West grew all suffused

With sunset, and the farms were fused
With their own orchards on the hill,
The murmurous water-wheel stood still
Beside the bridge in yonder vale,
Nor yet the cushat plainings fail,
Then would she through the open door
That opened on the lawn outpour
A mystic organ harmony
So dreamlike over earth and sky
That in dusk woods wee birds that doze
Sank deeper into sweet repose:
While Maud hung over her, or drank
That music as the twilight sank
Upon the terrace walk, until
The fluttering white robe would fill
Her grateful sight, till Ellen came
And her pale spirit-brow the flame
Of a young moon kissed sisterly;
Maud asked no heaven, with Ellen by.

Men called her somewhat cold and stern;
On blatant folly she could turn
Severely—not for her the looks
Of amorous men; in learned books
Immersed she seemed, and yet she kept
A nook of heart where Ellen crept
So warm the love of common wives
Were pale, methinks, to that which lives

In this stern woman for her friend.
If Ellen absent do not send
By every mail some word that bears
On her own self, tells how she fares,
Even the very dress she wears,
That Maud may image her distinct,
The daily drudgeries have linked
With them no joy for Maud; she droops,
And only for to-morrow hopes.

The little ones had asked a boon
One balmy summer afternoon
When they and Ellen and her lord
To spend what days he might afford
From public duties here with Maud
Had come: the children eager prayed
That where by Maud's command was made
Up high among the chestnut boughs,
Where the breeze freshly stirs and soughs,
What Maud had called a children's nest
(Not stern to them the weans confessed)
With nailed sawn branch and stairs that wound
About the grey trunk from the ground,
That here at tea-time should be spread
Their evening meal—and here new bread,
Fresh pats of butter, milk that foamed,
Huge strawberries ripe crimson-domed,
In porcelain translucent slight

As eggs the shy wildbird by flight
In her moss nest reveals to light,
And other dainties, on the rude
Plank of a table tempting stood.
The children feasted, Ellen by
Aglow with their felicity,
While light and shade from flickering leaves
Soft chequerwork about them weaves;
Then gamesome through the woods they run,
Their shadows in the westering sun
Slow-lengthening, and laugh and pull
The bluebells, what a basketful!
And Maud and Ellen wander too,
While notes of rapture filter through
The leafage as from Heaven's blue;
So arm in arm they wander home,
But in the after-sunset gloom
Out on the dusky dewy lawn
Those dulcet organ-tones are borne.

So time wears on; Maud's late brown hair
Is streaked with grey, though not the fair
Of Ellen's in its gleamy fold;
And she is absent, as of old.
But now so far her dwelling-place
Long linger letters o'er the space.
Her health has ailed, and friends advise
For her the warmth of southern skies;

But thrice the welcome echoing horn
Has thrilled Maud in the sunny morn;
She knows yon bluff mail-guard may bear
The writing that she holds so dear—
Each morn a blank—her heart feels faint,
Yet never makes she open plaint.
At length, 'mongst others, rimmed with black
A letter comes—not *hers*—and back
The blood ebbs sudden from her face;
Some dizzy darkness doth efface
The happy day; she dares not read—
She knows all day for her is dead.
And yet the record is of peace,
Of life still lapsing till it cease,
And our few fretful bubbles die
In fathomless tranquillity!
Herself had told of orange-groves
Beneath the window that she loves,
Whence she can look upon the main
Rich velvet-blue with ne'er a stain,
O'erarched with sapphire crystalline
Pale blending in horizons fine:
The letter adds that there she lay,
And with each rising of the day
Fresh-crowned with youth's immortal ray
A little more she fades away,
Albeit the strong man sobbing pray:
Close to her window, damp the brow,

Faint to the dim eye waneth now
Yon far seablue, and soft warm air
To failing sense doth fragrance bear
Of her dear garden; till so calm
She passed it seemed that air of balm
Lured sisterlike her gentle sprite
To flutter with it into light.
The end to Ellen came serene;
Death was on Jesus' breast to lean
After life's supper by him spread—
Maud only felt that she was dead.

They said her friend was gone before;
She felt she would not see her more.
She did her duties as of old,
But all her face looked grey and cold.
Some glow with their own spirit's heat,
Their joy full-pulsed will ever beat
And kindle dullest clouds that stain
Till sorrow burns in glory's train;
But some for joy do much depend
On what these favoured spirits lend,
And like a snow-alp Maud grew wan
When Ellen sank who was her sun.
Nor had she left a friend to stir
The healing fount of tears for her;
For then with broken whispers they,
Naming the one beloved who lay

In darkness yonder, surely could
Ease each her solitary load.
To lose one only friend is loss—
Is loss of all—and ne'er would cross
Maud's lips from now that sacred name:
But Ellen's sunny room the same
As when she left it stays, all fair
And only waiting Ellen there
As Maud has decked; she keeps the key;
None ever enter there but she
At night when all sleeps tranquilly,
If weeping there are none to see.
Each little trifle lying out
'Gainst Ellen's coming spread about
She has been wont how oft! to use;
Maud even her favourite flowers renews.
And as to name the lost none dare,
So from the dark day Maud can bear
No stranger hand to touch the keys
Whose organ-tones upon the breeze
Were wont at evening time to float,
Nor have the hushed woods heard a note
Since Ellen went; but in her room
Maud lives in ever lonely gloom,
Her heart in Ellen's foreign tomb.
Scarce would she see a human face
Unless for duty.

But the place

In later years one visited:
Nor knew that sacred to the dead
Maud kept the organ—waiting there,
And finding music many a year
Laid by disused as it was left
By Ellen, took it up and cleft
The long years' silence with a strain
That Maud of yore had been more fain
To listen for than any one,
When happy day's bright current on
With lapse insensible had flown.
And it was such a summer-eve,
Fair as those were, and Maud to leave
Her solitary chamber thought,
For evening's peace within her wrought
Some peace of spirit, and she felt
As Ellen's spirit with her dwelt—
When lo! once more the organ breathes,
And as she trembling stands enwreathes
Her numb and wounded heart once more
As in dear faded eves of yore
With old familiar arms of love—
As if such grief found power to move
At last the daisy-sprinkled dead
To turn and yearn to it and spread
Wide arms of love to fold us round
For all the deep sleep underground!
To Maud that organ-voice had grown

As Ellen's voice, her very own,
Rare breathings from her secret soul:
Who now but Ellen's self should roll
To-night the old weird harmonies
So faintly breathed as from the skies
To call the sweet mist in the eyes?
'And is she come herself again?
'Even in God's very smile my pain
'Like a vague shadow flitted o'er
'Her basking spirit, and it bore
'Her down a moment, ah! not more
'An angel than she was of yore!'
She weeps but quiet tears and sweet
While silent steals she down and fleet,
So noiseless entering the player
Plays on, nor dreams that she is there.
She stands in deepening twilight, now
The old low melancholy flow
Of wind is in the elms; through tears
Afar through twilight vague appears
The figure playing, she could deem
It is the Ellen of her dream!
She knows she dreams, yet loves too well
To let the dear illusion dwell;
Until at last so mighty throbs
Her pent emotion that she sobs
Aloud, and startling causes turn
The player, who views amazed the stern

Pale woman shaken thus with grief—
Ah! healthful tears, ye bring relief.
'Go on' she murmurs and she prays
For all the music Ellen plays.
So from that day God eased her load,
And more submissively she trod
Her lonely way, and comfort sought
In those sweet works that Ellen wrought,
Through intercourse with many poor,
Who bless her now she is no more.
She fell on sleep with hope the while
One face would on her waking smile.

MENCHERES:

A VISION OF OLD EGYPT*

I

METHOUGHT I floated on the ancient Nile
'Neath an abrupt and weird craggy pile,
Its flame-hued cliffs caverned with many a tomb,
Haunt of lone winds and birds of dusky plume.
A boat with monks that chaunted floated nigh;
But when they paused, some awful far reply
Came ever from the mountain's heart: one said,
'A voice from old-world priests of ages dead,
'Who slumbering in their stupendous fane
'Deep in yon mountain's heart are roused again
'With a faint consciousness that stirs and dies
'To breathe a note of hoary litanies,
'Erewhile they chaunted while impassive Death
'Quenched ever some poor heart's weak flame of faith.'
A tone it seemed bereft of life, unblest,
Emptied of thought and joy, vaguely opprest

* See Herodotus, Euterpe ii. 129.

A moment with the living voice of prayer
They have proved wasted on the lifeless air.
Embers of old hope wake to feel the doom
Of smothered souls in everlasting gloom.

Then changed the scene—for it was dark around:
Methought I lay in silence drear profound
On some hot sand; the close incumbent air
Reeked faint as from some dismal creature's lair,
Some presence nigh of bird or beast obscene,
Hyena, bat, that loves to lurk unseen.
And yet a dubious glimmer near me lay
Upon the sand, and slow the space to grey
Opened about me till I dim defined
Columnar masses pale gigantic-lined
Rude huge and lofty, with no capital
Or fretted moulding wrought fantastical,
Titanic blocks each horizontal laid
From pier to pier bridging abysmal shade.
And lo! I saw each giant pillar bulged
With form stupendous as of man, divulged
Standing each speechless vast along the stone,
Each to the full height of his pillar grown—
A colonnade of these on either hand
My twilit nave; afar they vague expand,
To my rapt vision dwindling infinite,
Phantoms assembling in the halls of Night!
And then I noted nigh a crevice small;

Through this I deemed that Day into the Hall
Passed half in awe to melt the shroud of gloom
That broods o'er these in their eternal tomb.
These then in pauses of the living prayer
Wailed that antistrophe of Death's despair!
And still night jealous claims them for her own,
Nor may her shadow free from them be thrown,
But silent like black water it abides
Forever resting down their mighty sides.
Their mummied forms are like their faces pale,
Each in vast crossing hands the crook and flail
Of an Osirian on his bosom broad
Holds folded close, each mitred like the god.

Their presence weighs upon the mortal sense,
Informs with fear the solitude intense,
Voiceless and moveless pale forever there,
In some unguessed unhuman-wise aware.
But calm serene is every countenance,
Unvexèd more of any human chance,
Sublime unearthly in its restfulness,
Quiet in Destiny the passionless.
Fond fool! to dream that hopes or joys or woes
Of ours may ruffle this immense repose!
Can ever these have been of mortal race,
Crushing for pelf or fame with eager face,
Throbbing for pleasure, flushed elate with gain,
Sullen or blank with loss and lit again?

Yea, these were mortal, even as thyself,
And thou shalt be as they, O wildered elf!
Blown tossed like sere leaves, little comforted,
Thou shalt be tranquil calm as are the dead!
Even thy vain bubble-turmoil in the flood
Viewed from the still height very grand and good!

Kindred with twilight now my vision grows,
And straight between each pillared phantom shows
Sunk in the darkness a sarcophagus,
Heart of the darkness, solid, ponderous;
The massy lid of each prodigious shoved
Awry as though the dread inmate had moved.
Then I knew these were Pharaohs of the Sun,
Ramses-Sesostris, Amunoph-Memnôn,
Sesortasen, and many a power beside,
Priest-kings imperial, who strode in pride
Over dwarfed continents astonished pale
Making the hearts of all the nations fail—
Then every breath bore rumours of their fame:
What are they now? the shadow of a name!

Longing to pierce the incrustation dense
Of forty centuries that hides from sense
All rich humanity of these past lives,
Vague embryonic there in me revives
A story from the blithe Ionian
Of one whose time the teller's time foreran

By generations more innumerous
Than lie 'tween Story's hoary sire and us.
So while thereon I muse and peer intent
Distincter gathers every lineament
Out of the twilight, till I seem to hear
Some eerie movement nigh yon shapes of fear
By one of shadowy sarcophagi,
Portentous ranged on either hand that die
From sight afar, dim dwindling infinite:
And then some shadowy form of stately height
And gait emerges to my questioning eyes
From where the night impenetrable lies—
Slow moving as with contemplation fraught,
The kingly head bowed lowly as in thought,
Until it nears me in rapt wonder laid
Upon the sand astonished, not afraid.
Softly it comes companioned of a shade
Thin traced upon the wan sandslope afar,
Pausing so nigh that all its features are
Evident to me, every shapely limb
And all its vesture with the gloaming dim.
It wears aspect of one in manhood's prime
Complexioned in no tender northern clime;
From all breathes moral intellectual power,
From the grand head's expansive lofty dower,
Howe'er curtailed of close-curled raven hair
Ranging to neck and cheek as natives wear;
Breathes from his dark and musing eyes that live
Once more and from the full mouth sensitive.

Of finest linen are his raiments woven,
With long straight folds the subtle fabric cloven,
Both long loose robe and apron girdled close
Of girdle, whose fronting flap is wrought in rows
Of golden asps and lion's heads; the neck
Bare shapely many a jewel doth bedeck—
Each slim wrist braceleted, his slender feet
Have gold-laced palm-leafed sandals for them meet.
Can then the searching of my thought intent
In that sad mound of human ashes blent,
Mere chaos and oblivion, restore
This Mycerinus as he lived of yore?
But hark! a murmur low and musical,
A voice upon my sense appears to fall.

Eternal river! soul of all the land,
Blue from the blue of heaven where I stand,
I wander through the palms that fringe thy shore
And thee lifegiving bountiful adore!
Thy waters plash
And through the gardens wash
Making a laugh of flowers as they flash.

'Tween intersecting runnels in rich spots
Rise tender riceblades, vividest green plots,
Or purple lupins or the tendrilled pea,
Or misty flax-beds thrilling airily,
With strained shadoof
Yon stooping hind aloof
Fills from the Nile his conduit constantly.

O sweetest shade of yon mimosa groves
Where soft-hued turtles ever coo their loves!
With mild flame-crest the gentle-toned hoopoe
Flits through shy sunlights into open blue,
If air unweaves
Loose clouds of dainty leaves,
Mantles mild sunniness the foliage through.

And all is fair, for thou art with me, child,
Sole budding of my house, dear undefiled,
My love, my hope, blithe like the merry bird,
Shrinking with shadowing of a chilly word!
The meanest thing
The old, the sorrowing,
In thy fresh facelight with rejoicing stirred.

And I grow young again breathing the air
Of early morning; all the prince's care,
All anxious quest for ever-eluding truth,
For woes of this great people all my ruth,
Melts all from me,
A child I gambol free
By the fresh bubbling springs of life with thee!

Dance on, my maiden, trip it on before,
Babbling strange tales to ne'er an auditor;
Singing by snatches, for a flower bending,
Blessing lone nooks of woodland in thy wending!
Through shade and sun,
Cease, little one, to run,
Now to the carven barge we will be tending.

And there upon the river's broad expanse
We'll watch the myriad-curling ripple glance,
On yon sandbank grey dotterel soft sip
The bright-brown fringe, or crested plover dip
With curtsey quick
At every calling click
Plumed black and white he utters in his trip.

'Tis noon, relentless rules the blaze
Of our Sun-god that ne'er a breeze allays.
Far far away the windless river burning
Through wan sand-levels dimly banked
Of distant yellow hills, but nearer flanked
With palm-girt loam-built thorps at every turning,
And oft a huge stone temple spread
With obelisk and sphinx and banner red;
Silent from heat our swarthy sailors towing
The boat becalmed with rope on land;
Anon some baked wave-minèd mass at hand
From yon loam-ridge is loosened in their going,
Falling with sudden splash and thud,
Nor mars my soul's luxurious mood
Enhanced of distant waterwheels' long droning,
For dreamy listlessness akin
To hazy light the lulled world swooneth in.
I know the hind in midst of that intoning
Sits in the centre of the wheel
While hemp-slung jars tilt ever and refill,

A yoke of patient circling oxen guiding,
Roofed from the scorching glare
By large leaves of the melons trellised there.
On yon low sandflat motionless abiding,
Behold a crocodile, and nigh
Upon the neighbour bank one may espy
Some ibis white with pink flamingoes resting;
But when day waneth we shall hear
Clangour of wild geese in the crystal clear,
Their living chain wedgewise the glory breasting.

Westers the great god, now I move
Brooding alone to yon palm-grove.
'Tis evening hour when the palm
Looks loveliest in skiey calm.
It seems to mount unwavering
Awhile for all delights that cling,
Till last yields all the high resolve
In graceful languor to dissolve,
Wanton with crimsoned plume in air,
Dally with moonlight soft and fair.

The Sun sinks—many a soul with him
Now must explore the regions dim.
The flood like molten metal glows,
Taking the tarnish soon that grows
On metal from the furnace poured,

With richest greens and purples floored
Beside, a brief but gorgeous hour—
Now wakes a breeze with welcome power
To speed the ship; they set the sail,
While I from far well-pleasèd hail
The terabôk and measured chaunt
Of oarsmen sweetly wont to haunt
Old Nile at evening, while the crew
Indolent near their fire strew
The deck: one stirs the lentil meal
Over the flame; our ship doth steal
Still as a spirit up the glow
Of dusking gold, her form below
And moonlight sail i' the water's hush
Fainter repeated, and the flush
Of her deck-fire with a blush.

They anchor now for night upon the strand.
Beneath a palm upon the visions grand
That occupy my soul I sit and brood,
Scheming to compass all my people's good.
From yon lone waste some dismal jackal bays,
Far dogs bark in the village as there strays
A wight belated; now while starbeams fleck
The tender grey of water, on my deck
Slumber my sailors: light of heart are they,
Laughing and singing blithely all the day,

In their scant raiment sleeping free from care—
But these are happy—yea, this people are
Light-hearted all—great Heaven! that is well:
Not bitterest agelong tyranny may quell
These buoyant natures incompressible.

Yet, O! my people toiling more than beasts
While your proud lords loll scornful at their feasts,
'Neath your tanned hide there beats a human heart,
Your bleeding feet with writhing lashes smart,
Your backs are mangled, but your spirits bleed
More sorely yet, for at your bitter need
A jeer, a curse, a contumelious lip
Excoriates more cruel than the whip!

I in disguise late roamed amid the clangs
From chisel and mallet of the slaving gangs
Among some toilers tottering 'neath the weight
Of rubble borne from where they excavate,
Whose dusk maimed limbs the rubble doth encrust,
Their overseer as they bear the dust
Clapping his hands to regulate the time
Of their monotonous mechanic chime.
I heard a youth approaching timid say,
'Let yon frail girl fall out, my lord, I pray!
'Put upon me her share of work to-day,
'She is so faint, sun beats upon her head!'
(His love she was for whom he dared to plead)

But the man spurned him with a brutal wit,
And soon the girl fell foaming in a fit.
Harnessed by thousands to the wooden sledge,
Those huge blocks quarried with the swollen wedge
These sweating human beasts of burden bore
Along the causeway from the river shore.
Scarce one is left to sow the fallow field,
Strong dykes neglected to the waters yield,
From frugal serfs the hoarded store is reft,
And starved men's corpses to the vultures left;
While to defraud the poor our priests combine
To load God's scales of justice, the Divine,
And sway them as the golden bribes incline!
Yet 'tis a noble pile that doth arise
Soon like my sire's to climb and flout the skies,
Scale with its flashing mount of lucid grey
Of Syenite fair radiant as Day
Yon very sanctuary of the Sun,
Who must wax pale when Pharaoh's work is done!
Foodful gold fields of Memphis withering prone
In leaguelong menace of their shadowy frown.

Alas! my people on crushed human breasts
Yon haughty mount of stone triumphant rests,
It was set up in hearts of your firstborn,
Of wives and daughters outraged and forlorn,
Kneaded with blood of men the lime adheres,
The iron that wrought was tempered in your tears!

And will the Avenger slumber evermore
For all the bitter crying of the poor?
How long may savour of men's evil deeds
Stink in the nostrils till Ra-Amun heeds?
Be patient, mortal! for He bides his time;
The world's deep curse and memory of their crime
Huge stones about the necks of these shall lie
Dragging them low to agelong infamy!
Ah! were I king—not for the weary state—
But I would snatch my people from such a fate,
Pour balm into their wounds and save my land
From the nigh blaze of Heaven's avenging brand,
Ere plague and famine decimate them quite,
And in limp hands lingers no more the might
To ward from glazing eyes the loathly foreign kite!
By day and night the burning longing grows
In me that God will to my soul disclose
No momentary easing of the pain,
Some drug with virtue to consume the bane!

II

Then my dream changed—on Mencheres the asp
In gold a king doth on his forehead clasp
Bespoke him monarch now: slowly he walked
And with some graceful noble stripling talked;
By mellowing grain lithe waved and simmering
In the blue morn lay their sweet communing.

Earnest intent the stripling's mobile face
With hearkening, save when a sudden race
Some jerboa commenced with nimble leap
Nigh to their startling feet, or at the sweep
Of shadowing pinions from a falcon nigh;
Then wandered the chace-lover's eager eye
And thought awhile—then oft King Mencheres
Would pause and shift allusion upon these,
Instinct with heedful sympathy and keen
For all men doting christen great and mean.

Measures accomplished or projected still
For weal of craftsmen, weal of men who till,
For stimulating niggardly dull soil
To liberal crown a less laborious toil,
Arrest a partial handling of the laws
And pluck their prey from ravenous red claws,
Such themes their converse visits as they wend,
Higher illuminating in the end,
Startling the silent heart of mysteries
Where vulgar footfall ne'er profanely pries.
"Too subtle abstruse unhuman such a creed
To serve the people in their hourly need;
To thee I open, dearest neophyte,
That thou and other few may bear the light
Enkindled here to many a darkling spirit,
How from the sacred lore we all inherit
I culled a germ, that lay as grain may lie

Shut from all use in sepulchres flung by,
Save it and plant and water it alone
Till sprout soft green wings from the jasper stone,
And wonder! for it springs to juiceful food,
Leaguelong gold seas of life for mortal good.
Yea, the old symbol of Osiris I
Took to fecundate and revivify;
Image of man's ideal life I wrought
For worship as with Deity full-fraught,
Breaking no other gods, yet setting mine
Supreme in every heart and every shrine.
But lo! we near sweet places cool and dim
Among the acacias; chaunt fair youth the hymn
You know of yours, rest here upon the mint
In flower, while I the marjoram will dint."

Holy yon living Stream
Ever twinborn all-luminous with beam
Of orient Day arising flush
With everlasting youth, lotus and rush
Waking from womb of parent Nile
Crimson beneath the Sun's engendering smile.
Hither let mortal bring
The votive offering!

Engendering the land
By quickening the river's loamy sand,
Whose eldest-born Leviathan
All reptiles follow and the lizard clan;
Emblemed in hawk of fervid eyes
And fire suppressed that in the plumage lies,

Lordly dominion, stately wings that sweep
As native to it all the sunny steep.
Hither let mortal bring
The votive offering!

Offspring himself of Light
That puts all chaos of the soul to flight.
Life culminates in human flower,
Her fair world-stem maturing into power
Of man's all-glassing consciousness,
Yielding to each a form and comeliness.
Hither let mortal bring
The votive offering!

Yea, with one flame Divine
High and mean things evolved in order shine,
Pain, wrong, but embryos of good,
Even our dwarf Virtue sapling of a wood
To crown with fruits of unforeboded grace
Worlds of intelligence of kinglier race.
Hither let mortal bring
The votive offering!

III

Some interval of years appeared to pass,
And then my vision showed as in a glass
Mencheres little aged, but sad and changed,
As slowly now and moodily he ranged
With echoing foot the shadowed peristyle
Of that vast inner court within the pile
Of his great palace, every massy column
Carved to a giant god of aspect solemn.

An aged priest stern grave and dignified
Worldwise of aspect pacing him beside.

'My hope is out—it is decreed in Heaven,
'I said, that I shall train this child to leaven
'The people with my doctrine when I go,
'For she had felt the godlike thirst to know,
'And knowing with her woman's heart and tact
'She might have vivified my dream to fact:
'In all men's soul the worship would have stirred
'And germinated; now your evil herd
'Of priesthood scenting peril roots it out
'With snout obscene, or in the arid drought
'Of dead parched superstition-ridden mind
'No soil congenial the seed can find.
'Now she is gone, my darling! stricken down,
'And since that hour I loathe my barren crown.
'For what am I to struggle on with God
'Since He withstands me in the way I trod?
'I thought to serve Him who will not be served;
'All my life's bleeding travail but deserved
'An early death—so spake the oracle.
'Though Egypt from my father's cruel rule
'Yet halts and bleeds, lies faint upon her face,
'Who am I with my yearning to embrace
'My stricken brethren and to make them strong
'With strength that doth to sons of God belong?
'Have not the gods themselves decreed the dole,

'Yea, degradation of the flesh and soul;
'Yea, wantonness of great men in their wrong
'And slaves to writhe as writhes the viper thong?'

Then spake the priestly noble old Shammâr:
'Vain, vain, my liege, with Deity you war!
'Do men know good from evil? only youth
'May dream possession of sufficing truth.
'The mushroom dreaded as a baneful food
'Proves oft a wholesome nutriment and good;
'We snatch by night some healing medicine,
'And lo! 'tis poison that we pour so keen
'For yon beloved sleeper ailing there,
'Or 'tis a potion fraught with virtues rare
'Mayhap for one, yet worse than impotent
'In such disease for such a temperament.
'And shall the Maker not be sovereign?
'Though men be crippled in their souls and slain,
'Few daring to affirm the bitter woe
'Wrought for their welfare whom it ground so low,
'Whose weal soe'er may sprout and germinate
'From the hot blood and tears of such a fate—
'So is it—would thy plummet dangle still,
'Or wilt thou chain the inexorable Will?
'Sooth spake the oracle, the gods decree
'These groans of Egypt and her infamy!

'Nay, what are good and evil? With a man

'Did God take counsel when He framed his plan
'That we pronounce it frustrate overthrown
'When in her march calm Nature spurns our own?
'Even as an elder things at random piled
'By hindering helping of a little child.
'Who frustrates His design? Some living men
'Are miserable slaves—what spirit then
'Lived in the tyrant dancing on the slave?
'Nay, some are born to sorrow or to rave,
'Some to be wise or happy till the grave,
'And what beyond? The secret cold He locks
'And all our turbulent guessing quiet mocks.
'Ours but to bow and to accept the lore
'In holy roll and in traditions hoar.
'Thothmes beguiled thee, whose were glosses vain
'On simple phrase and insolent disdain
'Of other reverend teachers, in the guise
'Of holy truth insinuating lies,
'Inventions of his own presumptuous wit:
'Now in Amenti hath he answered it!'

'Bootless on such a theme discourse hath grown,'
Replied the King, 'it profits full to own . . .
'. . . Me hath God used, now leaves me in the hollow;
'Vain where He goes mine eyes may strain to follow!

'The truth that I proclaimed was too sublime,
'Too pure, refined for dwellers in the slime.

'I deemed that they would clutch the saving rope
'I lowered within the chasm where they grope.
'Too feeble alas! dazed and distraught they play
'With this their only hope of life and day!
'Not worshipping my Truth, but with her dress
'Investing their old idols' nakedness.
'Not less than erst their misery I feel,
'But more a myriadfold than when to heal
'I fondly hoped; ah! vainly shall you fling
'To glut the bottomless pit of suffering
'Treasures untold of life and heart and mind,
'A myriad sage lovers of their kind!—
'Traitors administering make void my dream
'Even to mere earthly uses of my scheme—

. . . . . .

'Yet 'twas no Wizard's water that of eld
'These eyes farseeing with rapt gaze beheld
'Over the weary sand, far far away
'Where earth's hot waste dies into Heaven's grey—
'No mocking mirage as I dare to trust,
'But a true lake where mortal pilgrims must
'One day repose—but ever 'tis removed
'As we approach, the longed-for haven proved
'How distant still; no nearer now we seem
'Than when we started in the morning beam
'Brimful of faith that we must needs attain
'The goal ere yet life's day be on the wane!
'But now 'tis waning, still there looms around

'The old parched waste, the solitude profound,
'Our weary caravan yet toiling through
'Intolerable sand and blinding blue,
'While ever and anon beside the track
'Some vulture shadows with a blot of black
'The pallid wilderness, revealing why
'So fleshless yon bleached human members lie.
'My sun will soon be low, and every time
'He issues fresh from gates of night sublime,
'He notes one more hath fallen to the rear,
'A still white shape forgetting hope and fear!
'But I, with eyes for ever stedfastly
'Set on the far goal counting it so nigh,
'Chafed at the haltings of our caravan
'By springs that bubble, under palms that fan;
'For such there are, oases in the waste;
'Chided my fellows who would lingering taste:
'"These are impure, ye should be pressing on!"
'But lo! we are not near and sinks the sun!
'My night is near, I cannot even see
'That lake which in the morning shone for me;
'Weary and disappointed I have missed
'Soft bubbling water and soft airs that kissed;
'Under cool shade of palm and tamarind
'They found their blessing—mine I cannot find!

'Yet subtle in me were inlets of all pleasure,
'Subtler than wont, but never mine the leisure

'For toying in my youth; yet latterly,
'Grown doubtful more and more if ever I
'May share that triumph of posterity,
'And more and more oppressed with smothering sense
'Of my fool's prudence, baffling impotence,
'Often I muse if wisdom bid me scout
'The gods' rich gifts till they be wearied out!
'Who dowered me with all capacity,
'And with free hand rained largesse from on high,
'While I trod sullen upon all their wealth,
'Deaf to my strong-beseeching youth and health,
'Torturing brain with unavailing thought,
'Wringing my heart with alien pangs for nought,
'Aloof from sympathy, that spirit's gold,
'Baffled, alone, and prematurely old. . . .'

Cold Shammar stern rejoinder made nor spared:
'Therefore the gods (the oracle declared)
'Even because thou hast, a mortal, dared
'To cherish lawless visions for thy kind,
'To flout the pleasant toys wherewith they blind
'Creatures to heaven-appointed misery,
'Challenging their inscrutable decree,
'Lifting a rash rebellious look on high
'To their inviolable serenity;
'For this their lightning smites thee from above!
'Or shall a man lay claim to more of love,

'Justice more equal than the fateful gods?
'For this they visit with avenging rods!'

Then broke indignant answer like a flood:
'What irks to them man's evil or his good
'If but their altars want no savoury food
'Of innocent human or dumb victims' breath?
'For all these are insatiate of death,
'Insatiate of suffering like their priests
'Quaffing men's tears for wine at all their feasts!
'Therefore of gods I cry that there be none,
'We startle at our proper shadows thrown;
'For we are in the hand of sightless Fate
'That moulds with nought of consciousness our state!'

SHAMMAR

'Rash king! my pupil whom I trained in youth,
'Striving to leaven with venerable truth,
'Truth no invention of my feeble wit,
'But such as Heaven through us delivers it!
'Rejoicing once I saw thee fired with zeal
'Cruel confusions of the realm to heal
'By strenuous vindication of the true
'Faith sorely hurt by Chefren and Chufu.
'Ah! still the temples moulder and the shrine
'Lies desolate, and still the people pine—
'For all the treasure thou, king-priest profane,
'Hast dared from consecrated use distrain,

'While thou dost own thy fond presumptuous creed
'Like a weak staff hath broken in thy need!
'A king, a priest—nay, frown not, I will speak
'Even if thou swift vengeance on me wreak—
'A king and priest, from thee the sacrilege!
'Thou to destroy thine order's privilege!
'Ambition tempts thy proper caste to lower:
'When didst thou brook a rivalry in power?—
'Even for high-flown schemes benevolent,
'How to the land may happiness be lent
'When thou hast dealt us priests thine impious blow,
'Sole Heaven-elected channels of its flow?
'Yet I and all our order cordial
'In with your aims beneficent will fall
'If but from now you promise to redress
'Wrongs of the faithful and their dire distress.
'Come! make your peace with Heaven's incensed powers!
'So when they see your rebel spirit cowers,
'Who knows? the oracle may even reverse
'The doom decreed and your untimely curse.'

'Enough,' the King replied; 'you have not hid
'Your counsel from me and I have not chid.
'But, friend, there is almighty Destiny
'Over thine oracle, the gods, and me!
'Strong are thy gods—no more I will molest;
'Mine now be pleasure, silken ease and rest!'

'Yea better,' spake the priest, 'supine to lie
'Than your late haughty front's hostility.
'I count the slave of sense but as a beast,
'Yet venial his error if at least
'With zeal he guards our mysteries Divine
'From prying question, kneeling at the shrine
'Of his forefathers, vassal of the gods,
'Even though he rule his proper slave with rods.'

Bitterly smiled the younger man, but here
Some chamberlain obsequious drew near:
Who bowing low announced a peasant sought
His cause before the monarch might be brought
This very day—'"how else may justice come
'"Between the tax-collector of our nome
'"And my poor self?" Your majesty's command
'That never any barrier should stand
'To bar a prayer like this from your august——'
'Nay, you are right,' he answered; 'yet I must
'To-day refuse it; tell him that we hunt;
'Lady Nitocrè with me in the punt
'Among the flags upon our royal pool
'Hunts the wildfowl.'
'But is the man a fool,'
Shammâr broke forth, 'appealing to the King?
'Vex royal leisure for so mean a thing!
'Is this the seemly usage now at court?
'Bid him to our conclave anon resort.'

But little relished Mencheres the tone
Nor look that flitted faintly and was gone.
'Stay,' quietly he spoke with ire repressed,
'We do recall decision we expressed:
'Tell him to wait us at the outer gate
'Toward the sundown: there in royal state
'We shall attend as erst: if any need
'Justice among our people, let him plead!'

Then even Shammar quailed before his look,
Yet with a grieved wise air the head he shook:
'You make yourself too common: men despise
'A king who dangles ever in their eyes.'
'Lord Shammar,' stern rejoined the sovereign,
'Enough: do *you* remember that we reign!
'I leave your gods and all your craft to you,
'But by Ra-Amun sorely shall ye rue
'Setting at nought my sovereign decree
'Shielding the poor from your rapacity!'

Later Nitocrè, wife to Amasis
The minister, with many a wile and kiss
Strove to dissuade from his resolve her lover,
With her ripe gorgeous beauty hanging over
Him fired with her abundant mellow breast
And supple shapely shoulder bare of vest;
Yet nor large eyes that languished, nor superb
Head of night-locks with lissome snaky curb,

(A coil fire-eyed of seagreen emerald,)
Nor splendid arms that winding soft enthralled,
Prevailed upon him to relinquish base
The kingly task which called him to his place
That day at least—a place how nobly filled
Before alas! the nobler man was killed
In him the dreamer, little apt for strife
In slow undazzling processes of life,
Impatient with a march circuitous
Oft turning face from where the ideal glows.

IV

He banquets in the alabaster hall
Echoing slaves' obsequious footfall,
On ivory throne contorted limbs support,
From Syria pale, from Ethiopia swart;
He quaffs from jewelled beaker fair of shape
Sweet purple foam of Mareotic grape,
Feasting on viands rare, viol and lyre,
Pipe dance and song, feeding the sense with fire.

Yet soon he wearies of the rich repast,
(Fools' vapid laughter palls upon the taste,)
Where crowned with lotus many a courtier sits,
Who lives by letting out some flyblown wits,
Buffoon they pay for sport with dainty bits;
Who for some shining baubles they may dole
To feline malice prostitutes a soul,

To spiteful drivel and beslavering,
Incense men deem most grateful to a king;
Whose grovelling they suffer, yet disdain
More than pet monkeys with a ribbon chain.

Therefore he leaves the empty revel now,
Fillet of violet about the brow:
More dainty and effeminate his mien,
Still fair with lingering youth behold him lean
Upon some comrade of repulsive brow,
Of visage lewd, coarse-built and rude and low.

'Yet lingers one sweet drop within the cup
'Of life: shall senseless deserts drink it up
'Even as the rest? some youth remains to bless,
'Some relish of the sense, and comeliness.
'Long-prisoned joy may hesitate to fly,
'Yet craves brief wanton in the summer-sky
'Ere night be fallen—therefore softly pushes
'My light papyrus boat among the rushes,
'I flinging true the whirring wooden arm
'Mid wheeling wildfowl rising in alarm.
'Some blessed sense of living glows diffused
'Through muscles, nerves and organs long disused.
'Now first I learn, a fullgrown man at school
'Among young boys who well may count me fool,
'Now first I learn exulting to inhale
'Deep draughts of healthful airs that never fail

'Lavish to flood the sunny infinite,
'Now first my dulled sense revels in the light,
'Riding and curbing the incarnate wind
'My fleetfoot steed, with quivering spear to find
'And beard and charge the tusked bristling boar
'Roused from his moist lair by the reedy shore,
'Buffeting breasting royal-rolling Nile,
'Jubilant, scornful of the crocodile!

'Relish is ever keener from restraint;
'And since the glow of passion smoulders faint
'No more within my heart, but finds free vent,
'The illuminating blaze will ne'er be pent
'In one poor spot like any common fire;
'Since mirrors of a vast and fierce desire
'Prove cold clear marbles of the intellect,
'While thoughts' chaste halls—how cool till now!—reflect
'Fuel and fan one terrible red flame.
'And yet shall Reason bearded fail to tame
'Or govern rebel Passion's lawlessness?
'Inured to reigning shall she fail no less
'Than one long shut from all her right Divine?
'But if she govern, then I do but twine
'Festoons of blossom round some massive piers
'Of one grand palace all the spirit rears.
'Still, dove-eyed queen, sweet Sympathy may here
'Drop the gem priceless of her sacred tear,
'Still Love retain her own most holy fear

'Of hurting any whatsoe'er the greed,
'Still upon alien benefit sweet feed;
'Which lovely gods who cherishes at home
'Doth never wrong how far soe'er he roam,
'And though he learn by sharp experience
'The All is more than our circumference.'

'For subtleties I lack the competence:
'I blush not bluntly praising life of sense!'
Rejoined the other, 'what inspiring wine!
'Fervid the Sun—thy languid steps incline
'Toward yon labyrinth of trellised vine!'
There many a green nook tenderly he woo'd
And won to wait upon the softer mood,
Shaping themselves to bowers of delight,
Entwined with odorous roses pink and white.
There as they lie with all their being sweet
Unstrung, aware how in the lucid heat
Silken-winged elves with aimless fleeting float,
Aware that from the oar of the light boat
Some drops have laden with a gemmy freight
Yon oily lily leaves that scintillate
Level on the water, on them listless lying
Steals music, blooming to fruition, dying—
And lo! yon spaces, where the vine-leaves fringed
Caught mild green fire and tenderly impinged
Upon the blue laving in azure light,

Fill silently with forms of swavest white—
Although no kid may wander there to bite.

Lo! they emerge but coyly from the screen,
One by one gleaming on the sylvan scene.
Beautiful maids and youths the vines enclose
Hued like some petal of the faint blush-rose;
While amber lights luxuriously lie
O'er undulations of warm ivory,
Stealing at leisure into every charm;
And now they dance full many a rounded arm,
With slender flexile hand aurora-tipped,
On lovesick air waves like long flowers dipped
In a Spring zephyr's gentle fantasy;
Their rich white flesh dimpling deliciously,
Or smoothing to a stainless milk-expanse,
As bend voluptuous motions of the dance.
Some toss the timbrel or the castanet,
Wooing young limbs to lovelier flowing yet.
Waxing and waning of each tender limb,
Shoulder and bosom, waist and ankle slim,
Rarest of shading noteth unto sense,
Noteth faint heave and tender subsidence;
About their necks cascades of golden flow,
Their dewy eyes melt languid as they go:
And some are clothed with linen fabric fine,
Leaving the fancy little to divine,
Yet so enhancing all the charms that shine

Through as it clings into the silken skin,
Or falling free with mistlike lingering
From some bowed body, faint and saturate
With warmth and sweetness of its happier state.
Lo! when dusk evening falls these fair green alleys
Hung with soft lamps ring through with mirthful sallies,
And furious hot nameless orgies haste
That he impressing days with nights may taste,
Despite the gods, in overflowing measure
(Doubling their poor six years) long stinted pleasure;
For after this the mummy at the feast
Reminds, man ceaseth even as the beast.

V

Then all was silent: in a chamber next
I saw the monarch, and no longer vexed
Angry and miserable seemed his mien;
Upon that youth now grown to man did lean
The king, pale, near the dying, yet serene.

'Now help me to the embrasure—leave me so—
'Nay, lights I need not, let the afterglow
'Glimmer upon the sacred bull of gold
'That doth the body of my darling hold.
'So lies she as a blest Osirian.
'In Him divine ideal only can
'Live here or yonder a poor child of man.

'How often through the long nights have I stayed
'Beside her mourning, pondering, and prayed!
'With censers breathing odorous incense,
'Cinnamon, cassia, myrrh, frankincense,
'Winged talisman of Thummim on my breast
'Alive with jewels' firehearted unrest,
'Sardonyx, emerald and chrysoprase,
'And carbuncle that feeds the night with rays—
'How often from this window watched the stars,
'Seeking what sinister conjunction mars
'My destiny; with cabalistic sign,
'Pentacle, muttered charm, and vapours fine
'From mystic tripod, nightly summoned nigh
'Spirits to open out the mystery!
'But I possessed a wondrous healing gift;
'This, and half-earnest wonders wrought, uplift
'With veritable knowledge me to heights
'Of awe and worship; from the proud delights
'Of such thou knowest how oft I loathing turned
'To where my youth's pure aspiration burned,
'Mourning above that altar overturned!

'Now am I free to seek thee, love, at last!
'Expand like yon burnt gums into the vast,
'To seek thee, and thy mother whom I loved,
'From whom my soul's affection never roved.
'When by this life and others I shall learn
'Wisdom, a kinglier man I may return
'To earth—I know not—but 'tis something, friend,

'To look life in the face before the end,
'Praying our silent, our mysterious guide
'To tell his name, though never he replied
'To one; yet so at least we are not led
'Mere soulless things, clothed and amused and fed.
'And though some scheme we fondly fostered fail,
'Though ramparts of the evil we assail
'Be deaf to summons of our trumpet blast,
'Yea, though we stiff and mangled at the last
'Lie by the scarce-breached wall, 'tis not in vain;
'No bold, no high intentions but sustain
'The sacred cause, the spirit of the host
'Whose cause is God's, and never can be lost!
'Shall we, mere infants, petulant conclude
'That our wise Father leads not home to good
'If He desert the path we count direct,
'We with true heart but fumbling intellect?

'All creatures serve, for all must serve, the Lord;
'Rocks, winds, all living things fulfil his word.
'Shall we, who may with free and full consent
'Of all our being follow Him, content
'Ourselves with yielding passive like the clod,
'Or frantic darting with the hook of God
'Sunk in our jaws, hither and thither, fools!
'Spent with erratic effort, from our pools
'Doth not the mighty Angler draw us forth,
'Despite weak plaints and mad rebellious froth?

'The high gods offer their alternative,
'To march erect before them as they drive
'Bland and serene their high triumphal car;
'Or ignominious as captives are,
'Chained to their chariot-wheels, be dragged in dust
'A hissing and a scorn; for all we must
'Enhance the royal progress of their state,
'Or moody slaves, or conquerors elate.

'For me I knew it, acted as I knew;
'Yet have I failed and fallen as others do!
'My nature was a swiftly-running troop
'Where if the leader but a moment droop
'Or stumble, all the blindly-rushing throng
'Trample and crush him hurrying along.
'If with me gracious Reason bore the sway
'Pertaining to her from an early day,
'Passions and fancies of all face and hue,
'Portentous multitude, were growing too,
'A glory to the spirit's court, and sent
'On many a mission wise beneficent;
'Yet these but waited their occasion sly,
'Waited their sovereign's averted eye,
'Her wavering amid their fierce turmoil
'To pluck her from the throne and to despoil.
'Alas! ye know the rest. I fondly thought,
'Though traitor passions overbold and haught
'Waxed in my very presence, I could tame

'Them by a word when my occasion came;
'But when my righteous ardours in my face
'Fate flung, and mocking blew me to my place,
'At length my joints were loosened, I grew weak,
'And let the clamorous tongues unchided speak,
'Till when at length I frowned they overbore me,
'And swarming round me stunned, the rebels tore me.
'Of doing good to man my heart despaired,
'While lulled of sense less day by day I cared;
'And men wept on, but duller grew mine ears;
'I shut me from the importunate sound of tears,
'Muffled in roses, drowning with guitar
'Sobs that would ruffle sweet indolence and jar.
'I failed—and may my failure prove your warning!
'Ne'er now may dawn for me another morning:
'Yet in my failure I am comforted
'To know that not myself the legions led,
'The legions of God's children, but while I
'Defeated with my poor division lie,
'He waves the army on to victory.

'Yea, setting steadfastly my waning face
'Toward the mysterious future of the race,
'Ere mine eyes fail for ever they descry
'Far-off arisen a kinglier Man than I,
'One with a stronger purpose and more pure,
'Who, though the world assail him, shall endure;

'One with a clearer vision, wider scope,
'A faith more dauntless, a diviner hope! . . .
:
'Yet ah, my child, my wife, if ye had lived
'Mayhap my loftier purpose might have thrived.
'Could one from his ideal grovelling fall
'If near him, ever beckoning recall
'By their sweet faith untroubled simple pure,
'Stood heavenly souls himself had helped mature
'Through former years, with anxious nurturing
'On all of high and holy love may bring?
'Nay, but I thank the Gods for taking them.
'What adamantine barrier may stem
'Passion's o'erswollen infernal torrent-rush
'Whelming and desolating in the crush
'Reason, love, duty, all remorselessly?
'Such was the fate predestinate for me,
'Doomed from a child with strange and premature
'Flame of the sense nought may avail to cure
'Or quench, though smothered; many a chance-like wind
'Unaware fanning smouldering embers blind—
'Yea, this curst hand, thy fondling tears bedewed,
'In thy true heart's dear life-blood were imbued!
'And thou, blest child, whom envious Heavens claim,
'Might blush to-day naming thy father's name!

'Scarce in the dusk I see the pyramid

'That you will place my senseless shape amid—
'Less than the twain, you well observe it less—
'For till of late I yielded unto stress
'Of mere barbaric custom never, till
'My heart grew sick and weary, and my fill
'Of ease and pleasure I began to take. . . .
'Only, sweet youth, I charge thee for my sake,
'See that to lower me they only take
'The hale and strong, and many, ne'er a boy.
'Even in their very deaths our kings destroy
'Many a life more worthy than their own,
'Crushed under some huge carcase-coffer of stone.
'Do you who love me and have understood
'Strive as you may to fan the spark of good
'I may have kindled; my successor waits
'Impatient, and alas! I fear me hates
'The righteous cause. I leave it to the fates. . . .

'Yea, verily, the truth I uttered shall
'From their long lethargy the nations call,
'At first, like voices one who dreams may hear,
'Strange alien sense from sleep the words may wear,
'Yet in Heaven's hour, not mine, they shall put on
'No vague fool's meaning, but their very own;
'Yea, and a fuller than myself have known;
'Working insensibly through ages' course
'With alien agencies' calm patient force,
'Until at last dull slumbers give and break,

'And to clear vision all the peoples wake!
'By wrong and suffering and failure
'The dread World-Soul in darkness doth mature
'Immeasurable ends, and calm contrives,
'Tracing effacing myriad single lives;
'The child devours absorbs the sire and thrives
'More consummate—the infinite content
'Flows aye with tentative experiment.
'Behold the large moon, a sun's ghost, displayed
'O'er the new palm-girt huts and dykes I made—
'Over far flats, dim hills, and cereals,
'Temples and tombs, the Nile and his canals;
'In the elf-gleam commingling strangely lie
'Great and mean, living, dead, as in the eye
'Of all-transcending still Eternity!'

These the last words King Mencheres outspoke:
Soon after I believe that I awoke.

NOTE.

There seems to be very good evidence that the worship of Osiris assumed the prominent position justly attributed to it by Herodotus in the reign of King Mycerinus (a Greek form of Men-che-ra). I have accordingly combined this assumption with the story about Mycerinus in Herodotus. It must strike the reflecting reader as strange why the oracle at Buto should be so stern and uncompromising with a king who is described as not only just and benevolent, but also religious. If, however, we regard him as independent thinker and religious reformer, the mystery becomes much lighter. To the remarkable analogy

between this myth and the Christian History I need only here allude, lest any should cavil at that faint anticipation of Christianity which I have ascribed to the king. This, in fact, only amounts to his Osiris creed and his Egyptian half-belief in transmigration. The great Hebrew lawgiver was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; but of course I have not ventured to ascribe here any prevision of the future approaching in clearness to that of the inspired Hebrew prophets. I will only add that I believe the mind and character here pourtrayed to be on the whole distinctively Oriental. But in various ages and countries men essentially like one another have appeared, with similar aspirations, doubts, ideas, feelings, and inward conflicts, bearing also much the same relation to the world around them. And how widely separated soever in time and space, these men have borne a more striking family resemblance to one another than they have borne to those around them, to their own brothers and their own cousins. Take, e.g., such men as the writer of Ecclesiastes, Buddh, Empedocles, Giordano Bruno, Abelard, or Schelling. I doubt not there is a growth, a modification in ideas and feelings about philosophy and ethics; nevertheless between leading minds of different times there is that remarkable family likeness: the same problems, the same conflicts do wonderfully recur; and common human vitality may easily be sacrificed to an over erudite anxiety after literal correctness of outline and drapery. I do not think, however, that I have been guilty of any glaring anachronism here. The local colour is distinctively Egyptian, and old Egypt lives as vividly on the monuments as modern Egypt does around them. Between the two the difference is but slight. But the spirit in which I have worked has certainly been one in accordance with the view here maintained—that mind and character of a certain type vary far less in widely separated times and places than it is common to assume.

I need only add, that had I seen Mr. Matthew Arnold's fine poem *Mycerinus* before writing this, I might have hesitated to compete with so formidable a rival.

GANYMEDE

Azure the heaven with rare a feathery cloud;
Azure the sea, far-scintillating light,
Soft rich like velvet yielding to the eye;
Horizons haunted with some dreamlike sails;
A temple hypæthral open to sweet air
Nigh on the height, columned with solid flame,
Of flutings and acanthus-work instinct
With lithe green lizards and the shadows sharp
Slant barring golden floor and inner wall.

A locust-tree condensing all the light
On glossy leaves, and flaky spilling some
Sparkling among cool umbrage underneath;
There magically sobered mellow soft
At unaware beholding gently laid
A youth barelimbed the loveliest in the world,
Gloatingly falling on his lily side,
Smoothing one rounded arm and dainty hand
Whereon his head conscious and conquering
All chestnut-curled rests listless and superb;

Near him and leaning on the chequered bole
Sits his companion gazing on him fond,
A goat-herd whose rough hand on bulky knee
Holds a rude hollow reeden pipe of Pan,
Tanned clad with goatskin rudely-moulded huge;
While yonder, browsing in the rosemary
And cytisus, you hear a bearded goat,
Hear a fly humming with a droning bee
In yon wild thyme and in the myrtles low
That breathe in every feebly-blowing air;
Whose foamy bloom fair Ganymede anon
Plucks with a royal motion and an aim
Toward his comrade's tolerant fond face.
Far off cicada shrills among the pine,
And one may hear low tinkling where a stream
Yonder in planes and willows, from the beam
Of day coy hiding, runs with many a pool
Where the twain bathe how often in the cool!

And so they know not of the gradual cloud
That stains the zenith with a little stain,
Then grows expansive, nearing one would say
The happy earth—until at last a noise
As of a rushing wind invades the ear,
Gathering volume, and the shepherd sees,
Amazed forth-peering, dusking closing all
Startled and tremulous rock-roses nigh,
Portentous shadow; and before he may

Rise to explore the open, like a bolt
From heaven a prodigy descends at hand,
Absorbing daylight; some tremendous bird,
An eagle, yet in plumage as in form
And stature far transcending any bird
Imperial inhabiting lone clefts
And piny crags of this Idæan range.

But lo! the supernatural dread thing,
Creating wind from cavernous vast vans,
Now slanting swoops toward them, hovering
Over the fair boy smitten dumb with awe.
A moment more, and how no mortal knows,
The bird hath seized him, if it be a bird,
And he though wildered hardly seems afraid,
So lightly lovingly those eagle talons
Lock the soft yielding flesh of either flank,
His back so tender, thigh and shoulder pillowed
How warmly whitely in the tawny down
Of that imperial eagle amorous!
Whose beaked head with eyes of burning flame
Nestles along the tremulous sweet heave
Of his fair bosom budding with a blush,
So that one arm droops pensile all aglow
Over the neck immense, and hangs a hand
Frail like a shell, pink like an apple bloom;
While shadowy wings expansive waving wind
Jealously hide some beauty from the sun.

Poor hind! he fancied as the pinions clanged
In their ascent, he looking open-mouthed
Distraught yet passive, that the boy's blue eye
Sought him in soaring; his own gaze be sure
Wearied not famished feeding upon all
The youth's dear charms for ever vanishing
From his poor longing, hungered for in heaven—
Took his last fill of delicate flushed face,
And swelling leg and rose-depending foot,
Slim ankle, dimpling body rich and full.
Behold! he fades receding evermore
From straining vision misting dim with tears,
Gleaming aloft swanwhite into the blue
Relieved upon the dusky ravisher,
Deeper and deeper glutting amorous light,
That cruel swallows him for evermore.

ON THE RHINE

On the little plank-pier of the village,
The village on banks of Rhine,
With peasants brown from the tillage
See a travelling youth recline.

The rock with its castle facing,
Vine-hills in a sunny air,
The silver current chasing
With image reversed and rare.

But the youth loses eyes of dreaming
In the heat-haze luminous
Afar where the flood looks streaming
From skies mysterious.

Till a cloud or a smoke faint staining,
A phantom emerges dim:
Though his eye grow tired with straining,
His heart rings a happy chime

With the wash of the mighty water
As it forks at the pier piles,
And the peasants' careless laughter,
And the myriad river-smiles.

Now you see the deck of the steamer,
The froth of her rushing wheel;
She sidling smoother and tamer
Fling the uncoiling reel!

A maiden has waved him greeting
As he hurries across the plank,
While thirsty eyes in the meeting
Draughts for a century drank.

To the vineyards turn their glances
And storied castle shells,
To the creaming foam as it dances
In the crush of the paddle swells.

But their faces touch more nearly
Than anything compels
If two young travellers merely
Study the Drachenfels.

At the last I saw them standing
With wringing hands locked long;
But the careless crowd at the landing
To separate was strong.

To bear through the years asunder
With a change of cares and strife,
Till they only dreamily wonder
Where each has roved in life.

And if either came to the river
In a far-off after year,
And watched the sunlight quiver
On water about the pier;

It would seem as though two strangers
Had met as lovers here,
While they, mere careless rangers,
Travelled with him and her.

For the hour has been crowned and banished
When the youth stood there intent;
And the globes of the stream have vanished
Whereon his gaze was bent.

So lost are thought and feeling
That glimmered in boy and maid:
To the old spot wistful stealing
We find the Past is dead!

Our friends may be laughing or weeping
Much as they used of old,
Nor yet our little ones leaping
Over our loveless mould.

And one may indeed resemble
The man who was yours before,
And your yearning spirit a-tremble
May feel for the friend of yore.

Learn such a longing to smother:
Yesterday's friends are gone;
Your friend were not more another
Slept he under the stone.

Still stands the pier of the village;
But never from there again
That youth with men from the tillage
Eyes to the haze shall strain.

A LONG MOURNING

I

THEY tell her she has wept him long,
They bid her weep no more;
They point her to the shouting throng
Who welcomed her of yore.

II

Two years—'Tis long to weep the good,
The heart which loved her best;
The great deep heart which ever glowed
In her full-answering breast.

III

What gain to grieve? what gain in sooth
That face to face is pressed
One warm, and one dead-cold, where both
With life brimful caressed?

IV

And Echo breathes: What gain, what gain
To call the silent dead—
To call athwart the wind and rain
That sweep their lonely bed?

V

Had Shylock taken that living flesh
Close on the heart decreed,
How vain that breast all quivering fresh
To ask: What gain to bleed?

VI

We bid her idly, meaning well,
Be glad again as we:
Her sun is down as theirs who dwell
Far, far, beyond the sea!

VII

Erect she walked in all her ways
Ere nightfall stayed her foot;
Scarce may she thrid the dance's maze
Whose music all is mute.

VIII

Or must she wear that lying smile
Which chafes the wounded heart?
O! let the stricken deer awhile
Dwell, as she craves, apart!

IX

A woman she—I well believe
You wealthy ones and high
May deem a wife most weak to grieve
If a mere husband die.

X

If lives the greed you loved in him,
Though that brave heart be cold,
Weak sterile tears may only dim
Charms hourly growing old.

XI

The young, the generous, the wise,
Sleeps dark for evermore;
Pale shivering trees where he low lies
Wild wind and rain sweep o'er.

XII

Sweep you more callous o'er the mute,
And ogling drawl 'we prove
'Our faith resigned'—Your breaths pollute
A genuine woman's love!

XIII

She weeps with them, mean company!
Who own a human heart.
No more—their Father bring them nigh
Their sleepers, ne'er to part!

1863.

'IN A HALF-DARKENED ROOM I STOOD'

In a half-darkened room I stood
  One autumn afternoon;
The dying day in desolate mood
  Wept on with weary moan.
I looked toward a shadowed bed
  Where thou in fevered sleep
Didst labouring breathe: a nameless dread
  Made me in silence weep.
I saw the cheerless day's decline
  And then I looked on thee:
Thy life, the very source of mine,
  Seemed ebbing slow from me!
Ah! childhood's pure and happy hours!
  The tales you used to tell
I' the deep pine-wood, my hand in yours;
  And hers who died as well:
The kneeling at your knee to pray,
  The playing in your smile;
Sweet guidance of a later day;
  It seems a little while

Ago we three, close linked in love,
From all the world withdrawn,
I' the cottage near a chestnut grove
Watched Alpine eve and morn.
O memories, I cannot bear
Your wistful faces, go!
Baffled my flagging wings of prayer
In such a storm of woe.

. . . . . .

Yet Love took pity: slowly sank
The mantling tide of death
From thy dear lips: His love I thank
Which ever broadeneth
Before mine eyes, though they be dim!
Thy gentle life from now
Filled slow once more toward the brim
To bless where'er its flow—
Now this thine own sweet natal day
Once more in peace we spend:
Be calm as this their long array;
With birth to Heaven the end!

A NEW LIGHT

I

THERE is a low rude lichened wall that folds
A humble graveyard on a lowly hill;
Within there grows a solitary ash,
Amid whose delicate foliage myriad throats
Flood stainless blue with thronging notes of joy;
Whence elfin forms dip swift and shimmering
With wing's-rim spirting sunshine off in spray,
Air-skimmed their tremulous music from the mouth.
What trilling cheeping twittering in the tree!
How do they gossip fresh from over-sea,
With childlike breaks exuberant of glee,
Their strange experience in alien lands
And of the long long journey o'er the brine!
While underneath, the speargrass lush and tall
Upon each vivid blade lets flaky light
Slide glinting, kindling beryl atmosphere
In bowers below, where gamesome shadows play
With mingling daisy kingcup and sweet clover.

Here drones the bee with pollen-golden limb,
Haze-blue the landscape vague expands afar,
Where silver river shines from bosoming wood.
Here, dappled o'er of tender floating shadow,
Under the tree a boy was wont to lie
Three summers gone and commune with the soul,
The gentle soft-eyed spirit of the spot.
When last he came he wept into her lap
'Serene you'll smile, my playmate, when I go!'
He, frail and spiritual, communed oft
With echoes hollow from these vanished lives
Among their grassy mounds and tottering stones.

'Ah! yet,' he cried, this frail wan poet-boy,
'I'd live my own full proper life and die,
'I'd press deep in some flowerbells of the world,
'In to their dim soft-folded mystic heart
'Where lurk some clear rich honeydrops for man!
'I would add somewhat to the hivèd store,
'O'er human hearts all silent cold to me
'I would float free my thistledowns of thought
'To germinate chance-wafted where they fall,
'And quicken those barren tracts my soul o'er-
yearns
'To joy with purple-blossomed sympathy.
'Yea, I would press into the heart of things,
'Thence into human hearts, to be a power
'Therein to quicken, to soothe, to elevate,

'To thrill with joy of what I see and feel.
'Alone some little love and sympathy
'I crave from them, some warmth from fire I feed,
'Some smiling back in rainbow hues to me,
'Some tender breath of thanks from seeds I sow!
'For if I find it not, ah! woe is me;
'Must I not deem the wing-germs of my soul
'A mere dead dust, mine embers all aglow
'With heat and light mere simulated fire!

'Clasp but my hand, great brotherhood, in yours,
'And hail me one, though weak, yet one of you!
'Assure my steps with calm supernal eyes
'You who have won the goal—

'None answer me!
'For ye have scaled the height with yearlong toil
'Of hand and foot, and lying proudly there
'Too much in sooth it were that I should hope
'Help from you, patient conquerors, whom few
'Helped in your progress calm indomitable!
'Sweet is the flavour of the fruit of toil,
'When we have won it may we not enjoy?
'So hearkening to the still small inner voice
'"Thou art a poet," full of confidence
'I bend my gaze upon the Heaven-kissed height,
'Mounting alone—until the body faint—
'I shall be higher, life will not be lost. . . .

'Ah! yet how soon life falters to the close,
'And none may hear the feeble note I sing
'Mellowing hourly to entrance the world.
'Spare me awhile, sweet death, and come again,
'For now no token of me may remain,
'No undulation where the water gulfed,
'About my day's mild flash and faint report
'No lingering wraithlike mist among the wood,
'And no unquiet murmur in the rock!
'No muttered thunder from far realms of death
'Daring the shadowy mountains to forget
'The march of storm that smote and blinded them!

'Nay, why not be forgotten like the rest,
'As these are round me? unto God I yield
'Myself, my being—mother, so is best,
'And home I turn to fade upon thy breast
'Where blindly first I felt my way to life!'

Now he is dead—go seek him where he lay
Four springs ago—there is not any change;
Birds yet are shaking mazy song abroad;
As then the cherry and the applebloom
Heave silent rosed white foam athwart the blue,
And sleek leaves flutter over violet pools
In woods as then—ah! not those very birds,
Nor bloom those very blossoms, leaves and flowers!
Some change I ween the very place may show;

Yon turf freshmounded where he loved to lie—
Nay, but he lies there—only will not move
With dayfall homeward as he used of yore,
But lie through moonrise and unhasting stars;
No more *she* waits him near the cottage door
As in that summer gone, but near the wheel
She sits, a wintrier snow upon her head,
And a light faded from her reverend face.
And while he lies, all vainly mellow lights
With shadows move 'eye-music' o'er his breast,
A flowersoft breast of yore how sensitive!
Vain do the birds with tireless melody
Visit an ear more apt to thrill of yore
Than any sporecell tipping elfin moss
Upon some breezy hill-top—all in vain!
He sleeps and may not waken any more.

II

Yet look! behold! What splendid cavalcade
Draws nigh this lowly garden of the dead?
Grave men and reverend, liveried at least
In garbs imposing, with official air,
With pomp of gold-knobbed staff, trombone and drum,
Bland carrying lavish laurel coronets
And incense shut in silver thuribles.

It seems that one, some friend who haunts the grave,

Hath asked 'What seek you?' 'Tis the poet boy
'We seek,' they answer; 'to fulfil we come
'His aspiration, clasp his hand in ours,
'Hail him as one of us, with grand calm eyes
'Look courage into his, to chaunt his praise
'And fill his nostrils with our incense, Fame!'
The friend replies: 'It is a little late,
'Methinks, for this, wise mentors of young thought,
'Whose Solomon awards leave ne'er appeal!
'A carcase, O illustrious brotherhood,
'Claim for your fellow, clasp this clammy hand,
'Look courage in these blank lacklustre eyes,
'And titillate yon stiff dead cartilage
'With fumes of fame! Death's ear is somewhat dull,
'And look you this—this body might I fear
'Repay with scarce polite indifference
'Your fashionably tardy patronage!
'Lo! the World-Soul with birdsong, breath of flower,
'And summer light, may waken not his child;
'Will shawms and resin and your fetid breath
'(Though these be larger loss a myriadfold)
'Think you be more persuasive to arouse?—
'Yet in his life I never heard him crave
'Applause from you, nor kith nor kin of yours,
'Learned censors of the way wild roses blow!
'Who when we deem you nodding in assent
'Mayhap are only nodding in your sleep—
'Ye chance to want some "new light" I suppose,

'May one be found not vulgarly alive,
'Coarsely in need of you, and even as ye,
'Mere grimy feeding man—no footing yield
'To such! the dead are crowned with haloes vague,
'And draw the graceful the luxurious tear.
''Tis generous—and cheap—to praise the dead,
'Who press no claim—so living seer die!
'We pride us on the sepulchres we build
'For merit, torturing long-suffering stone.
'The seer, fool! would rather men should hear,
'Even if his clothes be coarse or grosser faults
'Of erring men be his, than wait the chance
'Of flattering lies above his callous dust!
'Tell, world-worn Dante! wert not thou consoled
'In far Ravenna, in thy foreign grave,
'When Florence piled thee yonder incubus
'In Santa Croce for a cenotaph?

'Yourselves have failed, shall other folk succeed?
'At least with thorns shall bristle all their road,
'And they shall climb, if climb they must, in blood!
'Well, friends, we challenge your alternative;
'For climb in face of all of you we will!

'But ye intend to keep our letters pure—
'Yea, as the worm benevolent intends
'When fretting in deep seas an oyster-shell
'To fill the wound with slow-secreted pearl!

'Nay, pearls are of the oyster, not the worm.
'What in the grand economy of God
'Exceeds the generation of a child?
'Yet shall we praise the lecher for his lust?
'Nay everything hath function of his own.
'Expect a gnat to settle, not to sting!
'Clutch bold your nettle, scotch your venomed snake,
'But only fools adjure them not to hurt.'

They only smiled a hard superior scorn,
Puffed at their hautboys, clattered on their drums,
While some began to swing the smoke abroad.
If yet he lived, he lived, methought, with God,
And well methought the quiet green spot he loved
Shrined his young body: so I held my ears
And turned away—these gentlemen I knew
Had private business of their own to do.

Poor boy! may one indeed akin to thee,
Seasoned more stern for battle and for toil,
Raise where thou liest a cross for memory!
And there enshrined in Death's ice-atmosphere
May thy fair head enwreathed with deathless flowers
Never decay, but grace the special peak
Thy delicate subtle genius hath scaled!

AN ANGEL'S GIFT

A LITTLE boy with clustered curl
  And soft wide eyes of ocean blue
Was kneeling where the misty swirl
  Of one sunbeam came silent through
The shadow of a curtain'd room
On cradled sister newly come.

Was kneeling by the tiny bed,
  And gazing on the tiny child
Asleep with hand above her head,
  And whispered, 'Down the beam so mild,
'Baby, did the angel move
'Folding thee with arms of love?

'Tearful left thee with us here,
  'Lingered long the heavenward wings,
'Poised upon the shining air,
  'Warmth of angel-folding clings
'Still O sister babe to thee
'Lapt in such serenity!

'Feeling yet those living thrills
'Of the stainless angel breast,
'When thine infant spirit fills
'With the rapture, unrepressed
'Lo! thy face it overflows
'In a smile mysterious.'

Came the father while the boy
Thoughts like these was whispering,
Gazed upon the common joy,
Felt 'from far my babe must bring
'Calm that seems profound as death,
'Yet is of life that openeth.

'I cannot deem such peace akin
'To any after peace of ours:
'Yet is it only that within
'The spirit sleeps with folded powers?
'A pilgrim sleeping in the vale
'No dreams of dizzy climbs assail.

'But each new height the spirit gains
'A fiercer storm of trouble daunts.
'Beyond the region of the rains
'And virgin snows the condor haunts,
'Far o'er the currents of our air
'Is there a sphere serene and rare?

'We dream, we hope, we trust that those
'Who with perplexed yet sunward face,
'With wavering steps and tortuous,
'Still brave the mist shall find the place.
'Then Love's rich spices shall embalm
'This fair void shell of baby calm.

'We know not what and whence we are,
'Nor how this human spirit grows;
'But should thy steps in years afar
'E'er turn where she and I repose,
'The grass of our twin graves will move
'And whisper, "They were led by Love!"'

Then came the mother: 'Look, my boy,
'Your angel comes who brought the child,'
The father said; she brimmed with joy
Spake, 'Jesus too was baby mild;
'My yearnings dying accents are
'That fall from His undying care.'

HÉAVENLY GUEST

I

SWATHED for awhile in weeds of earth
Near you she sits with folded wings;
Will you not know her till she flings
Them starry wide to leave your hearth?—

II

To leave it lonely dark and cold?—
Too late imploring hands are spread;
Could you not see before she fled
Light trembling out through every fold,

III

Exhaling subtle when she smiled
Or stirred or spake? O, gross and blind,
Through common things a common mind
Can see no glory breathing mild.

IV

That shy primrose so dear to God
A worldling's warped and jaded sense
Calls dull insipid innocence;
Wilt thou too be the callous clod?

V

Ah! had you recognised her birth
While yonder sat your meek-eyed dove,
Or moved on humble tasks of love,
Or touched to life your slumbering worth!

VI

Ourselves to conquer and to merge
In this the school of love we learn;
And helping *her* these bonds to spurn
She lifts us up to heaven's verge.

VII

Bestride the rocket as it flares
Through solitudes of startled night!
Yet know yon bird of humble flight
In yonder cage who modest bears

VIII

His suit of brown and trills alone
His low sweet song through dreary days
Is kin to him who breasts the rays,
Bursts all in music, melts in song.

IX

Oft folds his head beneath the wing,
Unvoiced his joy, yet sweet the rest,
His blithe bird-heart in peace possest;
So love secure may cease to sing

X

Awhile, then if brief twilights grow,
Let fall life's shadows, fools may cry
'How dwindles love's felicity!'
Love smiles who feels his heart aglow.

XI

They shiver, muffled up in furs.
Their blood but crawls, for ever cold;
If, as they croak, love turns to mould,
Life now at least our being stirs.

XII

These have not lived; but woodland fern
That nods in dropping diamonds
By some cascade—those tender fronds
Form trees where long blue summers burn.

CONSOLATION

I

MEN prate of iron will in vain,
When the flesh gives with spirit strain;
The colder nature, stronger frame,
Strong character but idly claim.

II

Now Reason reels upon her throne,
Dense dread about his spirit grown,
Who dares not breathe for fear to stir
Yon Horror slumbering close to her!

III

Madness, more awful-faced than all!
What may he do but shuddering fall
Upon the cold floor, praying Death
To save him and to take his breath?

IV

He feels that he has failed, has failed!
He hears it in the snow-storm wailed
Through this dim loveless chamber now:
List those numb finger-taps of snow!

V

Death, pale dread friend, already here?
Ah me! for youth 'tis very drear,
With nestlings eager for the sky,
To be torn earthward ruthlessly!

VI

Not one warm heart to pillow on—
Fold wings that would have sought the sun;
It only rests for thee to weep,
Thyself, a tired child, to sleep.

VII

Is there no Father, one Divine?
Ah! vainly doth his ear incline
To shape thought's answering muffled roll
Through dim vast labyrinths of soul.

VIII

There may be the essential Love,
In whom both he and all must move,
Or but a blind relentless arm,
That moulds and breaks with equal calm.

IX

A still small voice, than thought more clear,
Thought's echo lost, he yet may hear:
'In faith of Love Supreme there can
'Alone be formed a perfect man.'

X

Not on the mount withdrawn He stood
To sing that storm and calm are good,
But walked Himself the whelming wave,
By love to smoothe, by love to save!

XI

'I am the Son of God,' He saith:
Then grows the deep amen of Faith,
Who solemn chaunts, 'Yea, God is love,
'In whom we shall victorious prove!'

XII

He cannot hear—the storm is loud
And blinds him with a snowy shroud—
On those lone heights with catching breath
He flounders o'er the steep of death!

XIII

Yet till the last frail fibre of strength
Hath snapped, hold on—help speeds at length!
Yea, even in falling, arms outspread
To take chill darkness of the dead,

XIV

A hand may grasp, a bosom receive,
And warm thine own faint heart to live;
Embracing Death may change to one
Who pours life's own elixir down!

XV

Then ere the dying, if thou bind
True mate to thee, thy heart shall find
A simple girl excels thy dream,
As fruit its like in troubled stream.

XVI

Then when some dark mood passes by,
How sweet upon that breast to lie,
And feel the tremulous twilight swim
Of limpid eye sad love may brim!

XVII

Some guileless maid may wait for thee,
My brother, though thou canst not see!
Yet even if thy life must droop
Ere ripening of thy fondest hope,

XVIII

'Tis in the arms of Love thy fall:
Faith shakes her head serene at all
Her subtle sophist-questioners,
And childlike 'so it is' avers.

DEAR HEAD, LIE CALM

Dear head, lie calm upon my arm,
  Dear eyes, from mine drink mildest splendour!
So rills may leap aërial steep,
  Blue flowers they fall on mantling tender.

Eyelash so frail, inlay with trail
  Of shade her eyes, a maze of sweetness!
My soul sinks through their dimlit blue,
  To find in them her own completeness.

Eyelash, O light on petal white
  Of lid shed soft your delicate shading!
Lid silken-fringed and only tinged
  With vein's rathe violet faint pervading.

Lo! now she lies with folded eyes,
  Basking at rest in mine adoring;
To prison the sense, so more intense,
  She veils my glance's ardent pouring.

In watering flowers we stay the showers
A while, till these to roots be diving;
Behold! she drinks my gaze that sinks
Till each soul-fibre thrills new-living.

Dear head, lie calm upon my arm,
Dear guileless face all childlike beaming,
Ah! soft hair's fold kindling to gold,
Is not this more than all the dreaming?

'LEAVE GOD'S OWN RANKS DRAWN UP TO FIGHT'

I

LEAVE God's own ranks drawn up to fight,
And strike a hand in proffered palm
Of some fair foe to seek the calm,
To lie with her in fields of light.

II

Yet hark! Hell's gathering legion-tramp!
And if no crush of iron hoof
Through heart and brain you feel, 'tis proof
Death's numbness doth your spirit cramp!

III

Forego the battle, and forego
The kingly strength of spirit won,
The smile Divine when all is done
From heights of being man may know!

IV

Yet warrior camped at close of day
May list the lapse of some pure stream
That lingers in the soft moonbeam,
Gliding unheeded in the fray.

TO A WATERLILY

O WATERLILY,
Rendering stilly
A meek confession,
Sweet indiscretion,
In star-petals of heavenly white
Rayed forth from hidden gold of thy delight!
Candours revealing virgin gold of heart
That mellows linkèd snow of wings, apart
Where lowly tips
Dim glory lips
While vestal-reverent they half inurn
The shrine where holily thy flame doth burn:
Charming soft air,
Enthralling waters fair
From wonted flowing strenuous intense,
Lingering soothed for thy dear confidence!
Silverly gleaming tenderly they wind;
Tremulous all thy lily tale we find,
Pure tender tale thy soft white petals tell,
Glassed in their kindling bosom where it fell.

Faint airs inhume
Thy frail perfume!
Over thy green leaves, each a filmy boat,
Rimmed with mild light of water where they float,
Petals ray forth unruffled, pure from shame,
Inviolable thy virgin fame,
The soul of thee a heavenly flame,
Breathing stilly,
O waterlily!

BEFORE RAFFAELLE

O PURIST landscape, faint with mellow day!
O tranquil faces, shrined in tranquil light,
That Perugín, Angelico, beheld,
With air as listing far unearthly strains,
With eyes of yearning to the infinite,
And features lighted from serener skies!
We poring on you seem to gather wings,
Even as with stress of slowly mantling tide
A boat sways buoyant bedded yet in sand.
Your presence music-like doth round me flow,
Ye seem most like a silent blow
Of angel-flowers that enwreathe;
Surely I feel your feathers breathe
Thrilling about me in their sweep,
Yea, lift me as clear waters deep
When girdling round soft limbs their heave
Lifts grazing feet from sandy weave,
Unaware while our chins we lave
Coolly upon some azure wave.
So tender ravished may we float away

Where zephyr-like with gentle lover's breath
Ye from brows hot with earth's anxiety
May blow the hair and lure the burning out,
May soar inhaling dèep nepenthe-draughts
From all embroilments of a world of woe,
May lose ourselves unbodied saturate
In palpitating mazes of the day!

WHAT THE OLD CHURCH SAID

I MOVED a little where the church-tower rose
Above a close-grown belt of beech and firs,
And the tall pointed windows of the tower,
With slant flat bars of wood that broke the light
Through-shining from the facing windows, looked
Like the old church's melancholy eyes.
But as I mused, with slow deep-booming tone
The clock tolled one, and the sound died away.
It seemed as though the old church gave utterance
In that slow melancholy dying toll
To some oppression smothering the soul.
I weary of the years, (it seemed to say,)
The long slow years; I would that they might cease,
Or that I might withdraw me from their eyes!
Am I not wearied with so many suns
That rise to set, and with their lavish light,
Crimson and orange; with so many moons,
Crescent and full and waning, haunting pale
My lichened mullions where the ivy stirs
And rustles in the night-breeze, and the owl

With feathery face and large white open eyes
Sits hooting—with the clear-obscure of nights
Wherein the stars mount over me and go?
Beautiful! but the beauty palls upon me,
Ever the same, and I am very old:
I care not though the swallows dart and wheel
About my steeple, feeding on the wing
Their young exultant youth-wise in the air,
Which age, and fly thwart seas and rear their brood
Next summer, and forget their nurturing sires;
I care not though the flowers about my feet,
Over my graves, bud, open unaware,
Then loosening yield their petals to the grass,
And other youngling blossoms blush and blow
In the rich mould of parent-flowers' decay
Summer on summer; while the silent clouds
Grow in the blue, change fleetly and are gone:
I care not for their change and vanishing;
For these, all these fulfil themselves and die:
But for the glorious human things I care,
For all the faces through the centuries
I have seen lighted with a light beyond
The light of youth and health, a spirit-light
Of aspiration for eternity!
For all such faces waning one by one;
Many for disappointment and for doubt
Before the last, but all extinguished now,
First one and then another through the years

Darkened, befouled, effaced in damps of death;
Of this I weary, and for this make moan.
For all they came as little infants here
Opening dazed eyes upon the wonder-world,
Brought of their parents to the christening font
And dedicated to the Father in Christ;
Came as blithe children chafing at long prayers;
Came as paired lovers, with unutterable
Love in their eyes, and vowing faithfulness
Till death before the crowd, but in their hearts
Vowing strong love for ever and for ever!
And I was glad and pealed a merry peal
Of laughter from my bells triumphantly
Up the blue sky, and the blue answered me
With sunshine and with bird-song, and young maids
Strewed flowers before the bride who wept for joy.
Some came again cold, alienated, dull,
With all the glory-flush died out of them
And a fool's jeering at their nobler selves;
A few were faithful to their solemn vow
Before the crowd, and till death parted them
Loved on—and then they came again to me,
One carried on the shoulders of six men,
Dull, cold as clay, not to be looked upon;
The other with despair in poor vague eyes,
Swathed in black crape, to leave her in the vault
With generations of illustrious dead,
Under my feet here. I was sorrowful

And tolled my melancholy toll for grief.
After a few sad years he swore the same
To another bride all buoyant like the first
With hope and trust and joy, until he sank,
He of the scant grey hairs and dimming eyes
And failing spirit—and she buried him.
So they lie side by side, his wives and he;
With all the generations I have seen
Born, married, buried, over whom fair tombs
Are carven in marble down my solemn aisles.
So they lie side by side, his wives and he,
With no heart-burnings: never lip seeks lip
There in the darkness, never hand seeks hand,
There are no smiles—nor any weeping there.
Yet where, ah where, the sweet vows they have
vowed?
Unheeding in the coffin lies the corpse.
Where that ebullient love that brooked no bounds,
Mighty unconquerable like the dawn,
Chariot of fire that lifts a man to heaven!
Where is it now? Alas! I only hear
The ghostwind rushing moaning round my tower,
Strewing my worn stone winding-stairs with sticks
And straws from jackdaw nests high up my spire.
There the great clock, my heart, beats awfully
With throb monotonous: anon it seems
The solemn heart of Fate; or measured tread
Of Time, the cold relentless skeleton,

Awfully blind, informed with ne'er a soul,
Nay, with no dawning hope of any soul;
Soul that, how stony pitiless soe'er,
Knowing the deeds would falter and repent,
Nor might endure for ever to behold
Unmoved his own monotonous dull stamp
Moment by moment crushing out some bloom
Of life fresh wistful nestling to his feet! . . . .

I only know the solemn chaunted prayer,
And psalm of praise men come to sing below,
Wanders in snatches faintly up my tower,
There to be pounced upon of maniac winds,
Caught and devoured, and scattered all abroad!
Unheeding in the coffin lies the corpse.
'Tis all I know; and yet the children play,
The merry human children o'er the graves,
About their parents' headstones mouldering,
Like fairy boats upon green-mounded waves:
I hear their laughter on the sunny air,
For they know not, and woe is me, I know!
And so I weary of the slow sad years—
Would they might cease, or I withdraw from them,
Sink to a ruinous heap and be no more!

'AS A TALE THAT IS TOLD'

I

In flowers at morn a girl and boy,
While o'er them Spring's young leaflets toy,
Sleep locked in arms of mutual joy.

II

They babbled near the babbling brook,
While ringdoves coo'd from greenest nook,
Till sleep soft shadows o'er them shook.

III

At hand shy rabbits nibbling sit,
And close the speckled thrush hath lit,
While o'er their limbs gemmed insects flit.

IV

Where vivid-raptured foliage gloats
In swim of soaring day that floats
How tender! yon forget-me-nots

V

Are dimmed, it seems, with mist-like trail;
Some chilling Presence makes to pale
The woodland growth where'er it sail!

VI

Where each on each the children lean
Some fingers pitiless unseen
Their twining hands apart would wean.

VII

It creeps the loving sleepers o'er;
They stir, they wake; nor as of yore
In eyes of each to dote and pore.

VIII

They look abroad to earth and sky,
Till other human forms are nigh;
Then each to one of these will fly.

IX

So close they fold in alien arms,
The farewell scarce their accent warms,
They pass so rapt in alien charms!

X

Note such a new-made fondest pair,
And list how deep they both can swear
That nought shall part them foul or fair!

XI

But look upon the shadowed mound
One sinks and sinks in deadly swound;
He chafes her, kneeling on the ground.

XII

With anguish in his widened eye,
'She shall not—he'll not let her—die!'
She cannot hear his frenzied cry.

. . . . . .

XIII

Again the boy is laid in sleep,
Nigh where his chosen slumbers deep
For evermore—and near him creep

XIV

Those mist-like trailing garments chill;
Can Lethe dews from them distil,
To cool the forehead where they feel?

XV

He wakes with half the trouble flown;
Soon one who views him thus alone
Consoling arms hath round him thrown.

XVI

Hail! Time's mysterious healing art,
Who soothes the deadly-rankling smart
And pieces many a broken heart!

XVII

Each counts to find one curve of all
Full answering his proper call,
Yet echoing with sublimer fall.

XVIII

But in long years' close intercourse,
Ignoble chance will blow perforce
Trim coverings from hidden sores.

XIX

And lo! disgust—they meet so cold,
Scarce their bewildered memories hold
Remembrance of the straining fold!

XX

While hark! Time's ghostly laughter rings—
'To what I snatch man frantic clings,
'Yet o'er his new toy laughs and sings.

XXI

'And boasts, "'tis wise and well to bow,
'The past inevitable now;
'True beats my heart, though smooth my brow."

XXII

'Poor fool, it flatters thee to prate;
'In May the bird will find new mate:
'Disdain not thou thy kindred's fate.'

XXIII

And yet to me 'tis like disgrace
That one we think our soul's embrace
Should vanish thence and leave no trace.

XXIV

What then is human love? Our best,
Our strong abiding power confest;
Yet that seems mortal like the rest!

XXV

Nay! Time, we are not wholly thine;
The blind-born man will not repine,
But he who once knew Summer-shine.

XXVI

The brute more meek thy shackle wears;
Man chafes against the prison bars,
His pale face yearning to the stars! . . .

XXVII

Then sudden through the woodland rose
A wail of wind uproarious;
The huddling foliage pales and bows.

XXVIII

For choked with surging wrath, disdain,
That Phantom strove to fashion plain
The crushing sound, 'in vain, in vain!'

XXIX

So, when beneath some belfry-bells
One musing hears the organ swells,
A people's prayer the pauses fills.

XXX

But oft the wind's harsh-clamouring gust
Drowns all, as if the dead men's dust
Down those appealing mouths were thrust!

XXXI

Nay, if with dolèd power yet weak,
Even lower things will heavenward break,
Shall we whose conscious spirits seek

XXXII

With mightier stress a myriad-fold
To burst the fretting dykes that hold
In parent ocean to be rolled,

XXXIII

Shall we alone all vainly strive
Ourselves may more supremely live,
That nobler love in us may thrive?

XXXIV

Nay then, aver yon feeble rills
May wear their slow course down the hills,
But when with these the torrent fills,

XXXV

The torrent shall not surge away,
Leap, whelming all the rocks with spray,
To still its longing in the sea!

'TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?'

PRELUDE

To NOTE while lingering nigh some ivied porch
A fond old couple tottering to church
Among the grassy graves, with snowy hair,
Holding soft hands of children fresh and fair,
And muse we once were confident as they,
Who sad forebode the staff new chosen may
Break when we lean full in the perilous way!
To list float faintly through the open door
On summer airs the music that of yore
They loved and sung, father and mother dear,
On wings of humble hymns from care and fear
Rapt far into God's home of crystal clear—
To muse we pure and trustful children then
Soared by their side afar from mortal ken,
Such homely strains to chariots of fire
Changed by the breath of faith and strong desire,
(Alas! the glow has faded from them quite:
They than yon bee's drone in his flowery flight

Have now scarce more of meaning unto thee,
Save for a savour of sweet memory
And reverence for human hearts that cry!)—
To gaze by some worn father's shadowy bed
On boyhood's darling friend an hour dead,
To stand there with a mother blind for tears,
Nor breathe the hope that she when vision clears
Shall see so clear, yearning to tell her now
And help to melt from her some sorrow-snow,
Yet only clasp her, for thou dost not know. . . .
. . . May this be nought . . . or very hopeless woe?

I

Dark was the night: the great cathedral square
Lay desert, wind and rain swept everywhere,
Vacant of men the ancient terrace trees
Gloomed sullen o'er where swollen the river flees
Far down: between some phantom piers at hand
That bound the portico wherein I stand
Rain ever drips and beats with bounding flash
In stony pools hollowed of myriad plash,
Gleams in sick gleam from huddling dwellings mean
That on the night in ghastly squalor lean
With gabled roofs that dusk projecting grow,
O'er each a lowering frowning beetlebrow.
While from the lanes and filthy courts there ring
Cries, yells anon that leave me shivering

Howe'er from distance dulled, for here the poor
Herd, litter, agonize and still endure.
Then unaware stalked awful facing me
The hoar World-Sorrow and blank mystery!

I hid my face and, turning to the door,
Pushed strong the ponderous quilting hung before,
And gained the sanctuary: how the light
Breathed bland and warm unconscious of the night!
A suave, a fragrant luminous blue air
Pervades and dims the solemn regions there:
From calm aspiring of majestic pier
That turns and mingles with its neighbour near
In flexile spandril lost in holy gloom
Of high clerestory and triforium,
To yon bowed sea of suppliants that flow
Expansive down long nave and aisle below
About grey arches fluent refluent,
Even to the jewelled high altar eminent
With golden chalice, triptych, crucifix,
With spangled image and flamy candlesticks.
Below stiff gold of vestment and brocade
On clustered priest, fair acolytes arrayed
In lace and linen thuribles are swinging,
Whence curl soft indolent blue odours winging,
And all their subtle breath doth permeate,
Fusing to one mild splendour all the state;
A constellation rich unto the core,

Yet unobtruding all the radiant store,
Somnolent as of homage full secure.
Only when priests in murmuring bend low
The slumbrous glory wakes to flash and flow:
List from yon white throats of the boyish choir
Sails music, seraph plumed with hallowed fire,
Saileth and soareth, flooding all the soul,
Heralding the tempestuous organ-roll
Of sound insurgent whirling men aloft,
Hither and thither rapt, or cradled soft
In tender curling side-eddies like leaves
Some headlong torrent-flood no longer grieves!

Until behold the priest on marble stairs
Of the high altar in two hands upbears
The sacred elements, and prostrate all
As by one breath from God we bow and fall,
One multitude adoring; since 'tis here
Yon outer Mystery of guilt and fear
And suffering, who treadeth year by year
The same slow wheel whose rungs are living fire,
Worm of a never-dying dumb desire,
From everlasting inextinguishable,
To everlasting a devouring hell,
'Tis here, 'tis here alone one may resolve—
Here only we the dark enigma solve,
That agelong secret of our destiny
Princes and wise men sought with bitter cry

From the beginning, unavailing quest,
To innocent babes bequeathing their unrest.
But now at length behold from eyes Divine
Response triumphant on the ages shine!
I kneeled and worshipped, feeding on the Wonder
That ordinates the wild turmoil from under.

Yet as the stormful organ over us
Pealed surging through the fabric tremulous,
Betwixt unrolling banners of full sound
At intervals I seemed with awe profound
To know some mightier Tempest travelling round;
It grides with rush of wheeling pinion
Caught struggling in the tower's fretted stone,
That quakes to front such Visitant alone;
Sniffs like some famished thing that prowls anig
Wandering round and round with hungry eye;
Anon with such a maniac fury-shock
Charging, the minster seems to reel and rock
For all its amplitude of stately calm—
Yet is it more than momentary qualm?
For lo! the wind aloft with desolate wail
Dies, as for aye the poured-out heart must fail!
Nay but the frenzy only smoulders, burns,
Flares forth anew; for hark! the foe returns,
Shrieking to some who follow, a mad guide
To thunder-legions trampling far and wide
Filling all heaven; now precipitate

Flinging them crashing like some stroke of Fate
Full on the hoary venerable church;
Until methought the marble seemed to lurch
And swim beneath my feet; the arches heaved
Even as limber trees by tempest grieved:
Blindingly flashed a pallid-purple light,
And smote each countenance to ghastly white,
Bleaching all gold and silver, while the flame
Of lamp and altar-candle dwindle tame,
As though by Day surprised they paled for shame!

Then swift a pang of insecurity
Shot through my frame sharp, uncontrollably,
Howbeit all grew firm again and still,
Nor any soul but mine foreboded ill.
Did they not feel the very basement quake
Under their feet, nor all the minster shake
And shudder as with ague, that so calm
They list the music and inhale the balm?
I may not pause for all the ominous terror
Of outer night's inclemency, and error
That may be doom of mine unwitting whither
One seeking shelter may repair from hither:
Once more the ponderous portal-quilt I push,
And forth into the night-embroilment rush.

Blown by the whirlwind, lashed of driving rain,
Groping through solid darkness I sustain

Hardly my troubled and desponding heart
That feels her youth's full-trusted cable part,
With wildered swerving foot that hopes no goal . .
Yet from her swound anon awakes my soul,
Craving some shelter.

II

Soon from forth the dark
Emérges to my vision gaunt and stark
A pale bleared structure with a cyclops eye
Pent dull-lit in its narrowing forehead nigh.
Then something urged that I should enter here:
Mean was the aspect of the place and drear;
Large glazed square windows, yawning chasms of black,
Slit either dismal wall, guarding the track
Of either rigid passage through the pews,
Tall varnished pens that swallow men and bruise.
At intervals lank poles of iron prop
Green painted shelved broad galleries that drop,
Teeming with sober-vestured folk and trim,
Smug, irongrey, respectable and grim.
Flat whitewashed is the ceiling, and depend
Burners that flare with flame from end to end:
While from a pulpit roomy prominent,
Thereto the chapel's place of honour lent,
One in black raiment to a docile crowd

With accents blandly confident and loud
Expounds the riddle of the universe,
Complacent doth the seamless robe traverse
Woven in logic-looms, unwrinkling dress
Warrant to fit a Titan's nakedness:
Shameless unwieldy Nature dons a vest,
Smirks primly decent in a Sunday-best.
No venerable superstition here,
But all inferred coherently and clear;
And we admired our teacher dexterous,
Shuffling his words, expert, ingenious.

Yet unaware some door wide open flew,
And a wet wind unmannerly rushed through,
Sorely the staid folk discomposing, ruffling—
And lo! within the yawning chasm a scuffling,
An uproar more unseemly, smote the ear,
As if one pushed and fought to enter here.
A grimed and ragged man with eyes to fear,
And wolfish lean lank famine-pinched face,
Obtrude his squalor on the holy place,
And holy washed respectable smug folk!
Such monstrous portent may in sooth provoke
Yon pompous beadle, visaged like an ox,
Clad in gold lace, full-feeding, orthodox—
Since the low creature insolently braved
His ban official, snatched the thing it craved—
Such wrath, in sooth, well-founded may we think,

If the mean wretch were choleric with drink!
List now some dead sound of a massy blow,
And dull thud of a body fallen below
Two stone steps on the street! Oppression cold,
Some choking sense, of many a breath takes hold;
A feeble scream; much smelling salts; the door
Has slammed and closed securely as before.
Swallowing wrath, the preacher quietly
Resumes: 'Beloved, we might have been as he;
Is not grace special, sovereign, and free?'

Problem of life! how theologic wit
Can feel all round, beneath, the roots of it,
Dig up the mystery so cleanly laid
In a glib formula as in a spade!
And while I listened erst with night shut out,
Rain, wind and storm, and all the rabble rout
Of human things to-night familiar,
I could believe life's gordian tangles are
A mere child's puzzle to the fingers deft
Of faith, and needing nowise to be cleft.
But what if that unmentionable look
Of vague grey horror which the Darkness took
By yon cathedral in a lull of storm,
Confronting me, a ghastly-visaged form,
Should follow even when one turns to fly,
Blighting the soul with search of deadly eye,
Not skulking baffled there beyond the porch,

But staring livid into very church!
What if the monster coiled immense and far,
Enwinding all yet spied by ne'er a star,
Torpid, piled o'er with gloom, voluminous,
All unaware slide noiseless up to us
Out of the slumbrous folds a hideous head,
Hooded, flat, slimy, eyed with baleful red!
Sand-forts inviolate hoar babes we pile—
While the tide lingers—for a little while!
Even before the shock of ghastly fight
'Twixt famished sin and sleek fullfeeding right,
Here on the threshhold of the pauper's Brother,
On His the self-exiled from heaven, no other!
Even before, while eloquent he spake,
Making all plain, the teacher, would awake
Peeping a moment in my soul the doubt
If such sure axioms court the laying-out
Beside yon truths of gold by Reason won
From their dark stubborn matrix one by one?
Now Conscience outraged round to Reason wheeled,
Struck palm in hers, and her full triumph sealed:
Once more I shuddering felt the pavement lurch,
Once more abrupt I hurried from the church . . .

Out into rain, and wind, and gloom again—
Behold! a gaunt fierce woman did sustain
Upon her lap the head of him who fell
There on the lower step, in staunching well

The blood upon his forehead with her dress,
Muttering thick curses on the righteousness
Her graceless drunken paramour that smote.
And lo! their spurnèd, skeleton child remote
Stood in its rags to jeer the parents old,
Scalding the hag more blasphemous to scold.
Look! by yon bleared gaslamp nigh at hand
Night shameless disemboguing where I stand
Her reeking ducts of human misery,
Despair, and sin—beholding which I flee!

III

Unwitting whither, even as erewhile:
But the dream bore me over many a mile
This bout I trow—foundations must remain,
Though every superstructure ill sustain
Assaults of Time; stable, sublime, arranged
Of eld by seers, but in change unchanged,
And therefore perishable, doomed to fall,
Though many a weakling cling to each for all!

Unto what goal arrived? 'Tis evening now,
Not night—no storm—and surely I should know
The place! Yon hills that rear themselves afar,
Only more solid ashen sky they are
In circumfused grey vapours that involve,
Yet cannot whole-absorbing them dissolve;
Their lifted crests, dim heads of skeleton,

Over yon leaden lake, more pale that wan
Immerses their faint feet, filmy and dull,
Remote and sad, like Death impenetrable!
Wide leagues of stern brown barren region nigher
Mere cinders of an old world's dwindled fire;
Cinereous ragged crags, ravines that wind
Amid their umber shadow silent, blind,
Nor thereout ever to the open find
Their way again: but nearer than the brown
Tract with wan sulphur tinct around is grown
Thin rusty wheat in patches, a hot breeze
O'erwhispers fitfully; some olive-trees
Stunted and cavernous shiver, wax pale
To feel it passing, breathing a low wail,
On either side the stony arid path,
Which on the left of one descending hath
A glen that widens till one may descry
Fruit trees full-foliaged, fig and mulberry,
All in the twilight massed ambiguous—
Skirting the hill-side steep and devious.

While twilight deepens I behold beneath
Far in the glen, nested as in a wreath
Of foliage, some village of rough stone
With level roofs; one special house upgrown
On culminating ground into a tower.
And lo! anear it now at gloaming hour
Forth gleams one light of mildly-bodied flame,

Alone, as lit to beacon one who came
Along the path habitually at close
Of day to seek in that sweet home repose.
Intense the solitary stillness here,
Hot and oppressive weighs the atmosphere,
And all my spirit prostrate sinks opprest
With futile lifelong effort after rest.

Then I cried, Jesus, dost not Thou remain,
Even if all men's worship of Thee wane?
Thee, Thee, we need—O Jesus, come again!
And then the spot, the region where I stood,
A very reflex of my desolate mood,
Seemed half-familiar—surely I should know:
Did I not stand here not so long ago?
It dawns, it breaks, familiar verily!
For this should be the path to Bethany!

Why then, ah why! tell, spirit of my dream,
Here lead me? not in mockery I deem—
Here may I list what He the Master saith,
Here by the source primeval of our faith,
Sweet desert spring bubbling among the stones,
Purer than after girdling human thrones!

Nay but, I cried, we need thy presence now,
Thy kingly gaze, and thine imperial brow.

How many a long league onward have we travelled,
In what a labyrinth of thorns enravelled
With halting foot we wander—O that yet
Thou wert beside us! do we not forget,
Through all yon hazy distance of the years,
A world new-found of alien hopes and fears,
Wellnigh forget the features of thy face,
Thy gait, thine accent, yearning to retrace
Vainly thine image fading in our soul,
That flickers, wavers, and evades control?
We halt with knowledge all unbodèd then,
Fevered explorers, much-adventuring men,
Now on some hill foreseeing through a glass
Far flowering futures where we hope to pass,
Now floundering in deadliest morass,
Haunted with lurking flames of tiger-eyes,
Probing dusk hearts of loneliest mysteries.

Full oft we hesitate opprest with doubt,
Longing to fling our burdens, wearied out,
Forever from us, for the way is long,
About our feet confounding shadows throng,
Neither discern we plainly any more
To what far goal we tend, nor off what shore
Erewhile we drifted, or at whose command,
Or if before us lieth any land.
Lost, wildered, orphaned in this new-found world,
What relish in its glories morn-impearled

Of fruit and blade and flower about us tost,
To us who had a Father, and have lost!
We had a leader once, and he is gone.
Do we not stand in bitter need of one?
Arise, be gracious unto this our day—
Once more desert Thy heavens and point the way!

Look all along dim regions overpast
Since that dear morn when Thou wert with us last,
Name them by name, assure us where we are,
Where lies our journey, to what goal afar.
Yea, tell us also, whisper in our ear
Of Him whom deep in silence we revere!
Ever He lives we know from age to age,
Mover and moved in mortal pilgrimage;
Yet our wings fail us that would fain aspire
'Neath that blank face of our eternal Sire,
Ever more baffling wistful human eyes
With each new lore man's mortal life supplies:
Ever we learn He is not what He seemed;
Need now one teach us what He may be deemed.
Thou didst reveal Him to the world of old;
Are we not also hungering to be told
What Name would haunt thy burning lips if Thou
Could come again to dwell among us now?

Gentle and strong and faithful, just and wise;
Such an one set among confusing cries

And aims of ours—who with our own flesh fight,
Each taking each for foeman in the night!
Return, O Saviour, garbed as men use to-day!
All guileless hearts must worship and obey;
Though worldly men yet harden into stone
Reviling souls more human than their own!
Keep us the while, O keep us sensitive
To those who most reflect Thee while we live!
Who cower as one might in a prison flung
Stunned of harsh wrangling in a stranger tongue,
Yet roused to rapture if some casement swing
Opening a way to airs of odorous wing,
Airs, happy elfins wandering at will
O'er sunny meadows taking all their fill
Of flowery pleasance; from far fields they come
Dewing dim eyes with memories of home—
—Though worldlings turn a dull impassive face
O'er such sweet glimpses of a heavenlier place.

. . . Might He come back, come only for an hour,
What were the wealth of all the worlds for dower
Weighed with it? for the secret of some power
Over our baser nature should He give,
That slowly coffins men while yet they live,
Reason, affections, aspirations high
Tranced rigid, reft of strength to move or cry!
To Him the ghastliest boding one might bare,
Nor fear repression of some witless stare,

Or any harsh frown of intolerance;
Yea one might court the lightning of His glance
In deep hidden chambers where no countenance
Of human foe nor human friend hath pried;
Through He would know us, know us far and wide,
Scorning nor rose nor livid poison flowers
Nature prolific on her children showers!
And ah! how oft when none are by we groan,
O for one person mingling with our own!
Ye named us friends! are soul and body one?
Or did ye name in cynical sarcasm?
For have we bridged the ever-sundering chasm
'Twixt man and man, who leaning e'er so much
Never, howe'er they strain, with hearts may touch?
Yet He were not unkind or alien-souled,
From shy warm wistful touches shrinking cold
Like common friends when heart yearns forth to heart,
Longing to tear all sundering swathes apart—
One warm hour wanton to men's longing lends
Semblance of pale life and as wanton ends;
But He, methinks, He were the Friend of friends!

Might He not bless this ailing age with health
Languishing faint with surfeit of her wealth,
Toiling to hoard and of repletion dying,
Her vital juice unfunctioned for supplying
To every organ, member, of her frame

Due nourishment each one from food may claim?
Yea, we are rich, and yet the people die
Of all their human nature's atrophy!
Starved hearts and brains and limbs but toil and moil
One pampered organ of the frame to spoil.
Might He not solve this problem of the poor
Who litter, agonise, and still endure?

Vain! ah, what multitudes through all the years
Have strewn and burdened with such hopes and fears
Meek little-heeding earth, with human tears
Made humid these dumb stones as I have done,
Since Thou, O Master, camest here alone
Weeping divinest woes were ever known!
Mary and Martha long their village sweet
Forgets, and where, ah! where, Thy sacred feet?
Would they come back, come only for an hour,
What were the wealth of all the worlds for dower
Weighed with it? . . .

. . . Then I slowly was aware
Of one approaching as I halted there.
Near and more near some calm firm footsteps came;
And while I listened strangely all my frame
Grew tense with expectation, tingling through
With some blest awe of wonder, while in view

That pilgrim rose upon the winding path,
And paused five paces from me where it hath
An olive leaning over; yet the night
Would suffer none to read the features right.

His raiment grave, so far as I might see,
The garb of common men appeared to be,
As natives of the land are wont to use—
I only felt my spirit could not choose
But know, and spring to meet Him, as the lark,
Of Dawn soft wakened, from the dewy dark
Inevitably springs into her breast!
I could but falter to His knees for rest,
Bury my face and loose all hold of thought,
With such absorbing bliss of wonder fraught
His presence! feeling flooded all my soul,
And from mine eyes in sweet warm weeping stole.

In kneeling I could only feel, not see,
The calm of some eternal eyes on me,
Yea and I think some hands upon my head
Peace passing understanding o'er me shed—
Yet I remember as I knelt I heard
When far and faint upon the hill there stirred
A night air melancholy washing through
Tree after tree in travelling till it blew
Hot on my neck, and wrung the olive nigh
With shuddering, and wandered with a sigh
Of inarticulate want along the glen—

And as my glance fell on the 'raiment then,
A ghostly gleam of light lay on the brown
Stuff woven of goat's hair, upon tuft and stone
Of bank and path.

Then sudden to the face
I looked in ecstasy—some shades efface,
In part from olive-foliage—yet why
So pallid, rigid, dim, that longing I
Can shape no image of the countenance?
But while with some vague terror now my glance
I rivet, ever to more fading change
The face I hungered for appears to range:
Until once more I fancy I can feel
The ghastly shiver and the drunken reel
Of earth alas! I well must recognise!
At which to frenzy stung my spirit cries—
And though He seems to melt from out my grasp,
My death-dewed hands with fierce despairing clasp
And clutch his skirt—'ah! perish all save Thee,'
Broke forth my soul, 'but Jesus! stay with me:
Thee, Thee to hold though all the worlds be gone!'
And yet my forehead smote the senseless stone
As I fell forward, plucking empty air . . .
. . . Howbeit some kind accents found me there:
'Christ is arisen; seek not the living here!
'I will not leave you, I will come to you.
'He that will do the will of God shall know!'

PAN

Ah! Nature, would that I before I pass
Might thrill with joy of thy communion
One childlife only knowing thee from far!
Love we may well, for surely one were nought
Without the other, intermarrying breath;
Nature the systole, thought the diastole
Of one Divine forever-beating Heart.
Feeding from her maternal breast we grow
Full to our height of stately dominance,
And yet create, yea dower as we grow
Her with all colour, form and comeliness.
Nature the heaving of a tender breast
Revealing inspiration from within,
Sweet rending of a calyx, telling clear
Expansion of the spirit's folded flower,
Nature the lake where looking long we fall
With our own likeness tremulous in love.

Surely the blind bliss buoying up a lark
Floating in sunlight over nests in May,

Bliss of mere living, amorous ecstasy,
Undulates echo from a lover's heart
That palpitates above a maiden won!
Simple the bird-bliss, but the human flushed
With solemn lights from two immensities
Of Past and Future, from the battle-field
Where joy was wrested a rich spoil from pain,
From vistas of the eagle-visioned soul
That widen aye to far infinity,
Whence comes the sisters Joy and Sorrow meet
Oft by the same mysterious fount of tears.

Ah! must the bird-bliss, full irradiate
As any dewdrop thrilling in the morn,
Waver, exhale like dew, or like a seed
Orbed fair before it moulders in the dark
Moist earth to formless mystery of growth,
Falter at filming of a far-off cloud,
Feel unaware a trouble in the spring
Of young serene unhazed limpidity;
Changefully fed through channels of long years,
Emerge profound experience of Man,
Fruition dusk of sorrow and of sin?
Wait only till the dew returns in rain,
Wait only till the formless germ shall flower,
Wait only till the stream becomes the sea,
Wait only till humanity fulfils
The cycle of a destiny sublime,

Entering bliss more mellow and more large,
Yet like the bird's full flawless and serene!—
All mortal happiness a reflex faint
From hidden rainbow far transcending ours. . .

Last culminating unaware decline
Must we toward the drear aphelion,
Once more expansive? hath the Universe
Infinite systems, each one with his own
Orbit of growth, his fringe of dulse and shells,
High-water and low-water line for each?
What if our spirits and our bodies here
But re-emerge ever transmigrated
Through everlasting from the Ineffable?
May they not still be with us after all,
Heroes and seers unto whom we yearn
O'er yon far sundering ocean of wan years?
Renewing ever an immortal youth—
Straitened, amazed, and weary in the rush
Unresting of the Universal Life,
Sloughing old personality, anon
Among the living with a more or less,
But ever fosterchildren of the time?

Yet unaware we light upon a stray
So lonely, weird, unfellowed among men,
So startling with resemblance to the world
Of tribes uncouth, outlandish and remote,

Or those we marvelling hold commune with
All indistinct through fading portraiture
Of art or creeds outworn, faint chronicles;
Grim pleasantry of nature it appears
To keep this old world denizen till now
Alone bewildered in an alien age!
Or hath he slept some strange enchanted sleep
While generations fleeted slowly by?
Behold! how wan and withered the fresh page
Of Life he read in when he sank to rest
Now he resumes! above his shoulder look!
In sooth I know how many pages on
O world we are! Yet something it may chance
We have let slip of what may profit still!
. . . Come then lift high the choral hymn of praise
That ever grows from rolling world and sea,
From angel, fiend, and hesitating man,
Who only with bewildered air sustains
That ever-pealing anthem unto One
Whose Form is the all-glorious Universe,
In ever-shifting accent, symbol, word,
Reverent, loving, wondering, with awe,
Humbly elate that in us for awhile
He deigns to lighten into consciousness,
That in the Son of Man Love full-beheld
His face, and lo! it was the face of God.

You blessed innocent living animals,

Through whom yon mountain self-involved in gloom,
And yon far fathomless unresting sea,
Sounding the whole harmonic scale of things,
Pass ever in slow travail up to man,
Have I not loved you, conscious brotherhood,
Ah! how much more than cold unlovely men
Dead callous all to man's prerogative,
Shut in some frigid blank fool's privilege
Of state or wealth and trampling fellow fools!
These have I loved not; rather mellow birds
Upon the bough and sheeny creeping things
Among green grass, red squirrels in the beech,
Such have I loved, some faithful-hearted hound
Shaggy, brown-eyed, that pants with lolling tongue,
Fair antlered deer of my ancestral glades,
All these companions chosen have I loved,
All these with what men foolish libellous
(For all is life) have named inanimate—
Cohesion, chemical affinities,
These but the earliest grey gleam of Love
Dawning in light, air, water, rock or stone,
And in faint fringes of organic life
Already blossoming through rainbow-rise
Of sweet desire to spiritual love!

O wondrous interchange of services,
Honours and functions in the universe!
Disdainful isolation in a world

Where nought may be sufficing to itself,
And where the noblest may the least suffice!
Wherefore wise lovers count not anything
In all the worlds for common or unclean.
The meanest reptile, if it only be,
By only being proves a right to be,
A use that failing the machinery
Of all the worlds had fallen out of gear.
Thou fated slayer, slay not like a beast,
In a blind panic, but remembering.
Look steadily till through the loathly crust
A soul puts forth a feeler seeking thine!
Creatures uncouth, yet these are on their way,
Blind and still distant from the goal, you touch,
Yet fellow pilgrims verily with you;
Dare you affirm there live not anywhere,
Nor in the teeming infinite dark womb
Of awful Nature ever shall be born,
Beings of glory so transcending yours
As ye transcend some annulated worm?
Nay day by day the lower forms are lost,
Yield all their own and re-emerge in man:
And so the coral of our myriad lives
Accumulates the sunny reef to be—
While yet in part, a soothing dream to me,
We may remingle with the lowlier life. . .

O blood that boils restless rebellious!

O passionate desiring and despair!
Say shall ye lapse anon to whence ye came,
Subside once more into the lovelier life
Of aimless airs unfettered and serene,
Of buoyant seas that sparkle under them,
Of unrepining cool meek-blooded flowers
Fair quiet fragrant, into laughing grass
Dishevelled and deflowered of warm wind?
Life faint of heart, pale, halting, insincere!
Divine aspiring like an ermine robe
Fretted to dust with moths of every day!
Sink, sink, O swell of vain-aspiring wave
Into your trough of earlier lowlihead,
Pass to some innocent elfin of sleek fur,
His nest the ripe wheat and his wine the dew!

And shall we climb, ascension infinite,
From star to star? explore from world to world—
Gods reigning yonder in the tranquil stars?
Death! what is Death? a turning-point of Life
Winding so sharp the way dips out of sight,
Seeming to end, yet winding on for ever
Through teeming glories of the Infinite.
Look with bold eyes unquailing in the face
Of that foul haunting phantom, it will fade,
Melt to the face of some familiar friend. . . .

One selfsame Spirit breathing evermore
Rouses in each the momentary wave,
One water and one motion and one wind,

Now feeble undulation myriadfold,
Now headlong mountain thunder-clothed and crowned
With foamy lightning; such we name Zerduscht,
Dante, Spinoza, or Napoleon—
The motion travels, and the wave subsides. . .

May cold ascetic hard, ill-favoured, crude
Ever persuade me vision and fond play
Of sense about fair fleshly loveliness
Of youth in man or woman is accurst—
Since God hath made the spirit, but a fiend
Hath mocked it with a syren phantom-flesh?—
Nay, to mine ear 'tis rankest blasphemy!
For is not flesh the shadow of the soul,
Her younger sister, both alike Divine?
Yea verily! for when I love a friend
How may I sunder body from the soul?
Few win my love, but they who win it seem
Ever well-favoured to me, and I greet
All comeliness of colour and of form,
Mere side reverse of spiritual grace.
Yea, limbs well turned and bodies almond-smooth
Full fair and white in maiden or in youth,
With what sense-thrillings may attend on these;
All lusty might of supple athletic men;
Are surely worthy reverence like flowers,
Or like the culminating heart and soul.
Only to each one yield his very own:
Yield to young sense his toy of fantasy,

And never frown until he glides to steal
The royal sceptre from Intelligence,
Or crown of light from spiritual Love.
Nor dare to maim lives infinite Divine
Seeking to graft one pale monotonous flower;
For is not Being thirsting to exhaust
His all exhaustless capability?
Evil mere vantage-ground for an advance,
If not for thee, yet for the universe,
And so for thee as member of the whole.

. . . . . .

But well may Nature's innocent wantoning
Be loved of men: she whispers of the nest.
Whence we have flown, she lisps our language low,
A sweet child-mimic, she is very fair,
Hiding coy secrets from her lovers all
Who will abide and listen at her heart;
Yea she will sorrow with your sorrow, sing,
Dance, leap for gladness if your mood be gay,
Flout ne'er nor lightly fling away your love,
Or lure to whelm in labyrinths of woe.
Her gentle breath, her breath is very sweet,
Breath of lush vegetation in the dew
Of a warm summer evening heavy faint
With slumbrous prodigal unbosoming
Of secret odours, delicate and shy!
If quiet lying heart to heart with her
Lost in the tranquil limpid of her eyes,

Will she not lull us with a lullaby
Soft marvellous, with spell beyond belief
To soothe one worn with conflict and with pain,
Sweet as a revelation from a star,
Sweet as a melody from elfin land
Woven from breath of grasses and frail flowers
And airs low tinkling tiny twinkling bells,
Will she not whisper of a lovelier life,
Beautiful, true, spontaneous and calm,
Guileless and gentle, bountiful and free?

IN MEMORIAM THACKERAY

THIS morn while roving o'er the wonted page
How many an eye arrested on it grew
Terribly fascinate, and breaths were held
A moment for dismay to read the words
Messengers of calamity to all!
How little looked for scaring us there stands
This morning early haunting every hearth
The pale and mournful phantom of thy loss!
Never again the noble rugged head
And silver locks my privilege to see . . .

Great human artist, lover of the true,
Deep skilled to feel the solemn pulse of man
Now beating grandly full, now fluttering faint!
Great satirist who with unquailing front
Dealt stern tremendous blows on laurelled lies
And baseness panoplied in golden mail
Imperial-purpled, swarmed about with slaves!
These named him 'cynic' that with ruthless hand

From them, stage-kings who thought to pass for
true,
He tore false trapping, stripped each puny thing,
And mocked mere blatant mouthing of a mime!
But manhood brave and kindly and sincere,
And tender womanhood a meek sweet flower,
He drew from 'neath the trampling feet of these,
Proclaiming very ministers of Heaven
In a corrupted world . . . Kind humourist
Opening oft a healthful mellow laugh
Of laughter for the innocent and young!

Now at this time, the wintry Christmas time,
Must he leave void his wonted place With us?
Weep!—not unmindful of the birth of Love!

CHRISTMAS 1863.

ON THE MOUNTAIN

LINGER a moment, for a moment only,
Here on the height!
Ere our sad feet must feel yon shadows lonely
Sinking to night.
In sooth I know it was but yesterday
You heard me chide
Your calm unhasting progress in the way,
O life, my guide!
An hour agone how fondly I aspired
To crown the crest
Of manly years where beautiful untired
Our elders rest—
Nay seem to rest, for slowly they decline
And leave the brow:
Region of glamour at the last made mine!
Where are they now?
I view them, I behold them, winding low:
Here it is day,
And all along the mountain from below;
But there away

Falls their dim going ever in the shade:
Only awhile
Linger, behold with morning in the glade
My home sweet smile
Warm in the vines! fair home, a hopeful child
I sped from you,
And since, how many a tearful barren wild
Too well I know!
Yet smooth and rugged, beautiful and foul,
Look fair from here,
Softened in mellowing memories of the soul
Made pure from fear.
I never dreamed of passing from the splendour,
Crowned once withal,
Who chid thy slowness when my years were tender,
Yet now I fall
Prone at thy feet, O friend mysterious!
Praying to rest:
Even if I knew them yonder waiting us,
Fair faces pressed
Of human lovers whom I longed to rouse,
Fold to my breast;
Yea if I knew yon music in the glooming
Of future years
Were surely welcome of sweet souls illuming
With light of tears
My feet confused, with grateful tears my feet;
Yea if I knew,

Still would I trammel all thy steps too fleet,
Feeling they flew.
For even if yonder may be human glory,
Acclaims that roll,
Here, even here, there beams upon my story
An aureole,
A heavenly purple, auroral light of youth
Reblooming never—
But there at most a sombre fire in sooth
Fading for ever!
What though for me may mellow sustenance
Of fruits hang low,
Crimson or golden in the way's advance,
Amber may flow,
Autumn may smoulder ripe and gorgeous
In clouds and leaves;
Fresh morning never as the pilgrim goes
From now relieves;
But all in shadowland he wavereth
Out of the sun,
Till in yon gloom of lowland stilly Death,
Dull-eyed and dun,
Feels at his feet for feeding with his breath
Oblivion!
Nay I repine not since upon the air,
Even while I go,
Clear floats a treble of young children fair
Who climb below.

Nay, I repine not, for I lift mine eyes
To heights afar
Tranquil abiding lovely in the skies,
Homes of the star.
Yea, in a vision I can see them moving,
Children of God,
Dear human creatures clear from ourreproving,
Nigh His abode.
Though fleeting our frail syllable of story,
God will rehearse
Fresh like the sea, grown never old and hoary,
His universe!

GARIBALDI: AN ODE

ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν.

I

SHOUT! a king of men is here!
Hurrah!
A long-descended monarch proud,
With right divine to hold men bowed?
Methinks we've seen such gods before,
And heard imbruted myriads roar
Acclaim to one with murdering sword
A lust of power hath foully gored,
Or marked some thin official cheer
Mid passers lowering through their fear—
Not such a king of men is here!

II

Shout! a king of men is here!
Hurrah!
No military pageant flares,
Nor cannon booms, nor trumpet blares,
But only mighty London pours
Her fire of life that chafes and roars,
Licks up the roofs with giant glee
And bursts at every window free!
Kerchiefs of women, banners wave,
As this king's mission were to save
Not kill; so run their mottoes brave!

III

Shout! a king of men is here!
Hurrah!
The people crowd his chariot way,
To grasp his hand they surge and sway;
From each full heart the welcome cries,
Each soul leaps forth from beaming eyes;
What hero so can stir us all?
This man at least hath saved from thrall
Our England! Nay, behold the man,
Yon lionlike Italian,
Whose calm pure smile our welcomes fan!

IV

Shout! a king of men is here!
Hurrah!
A king indeed of spirits this,
More like the kings in yonder bliss
Beyond the blue, like those we trust
Men shall own kings when we are dust,
In some far golden age of time,
When the old gods lie trailed in slime;
We labouring up the darkened stream
Behold in yonder orient gleam
One sail, a guide to morning's beam!

V

Shout! a king of men is here!
Hurrah!
Behold! this nature's flint and sand
Were fused in fire by Love's command
All to one diamond, for so
He and Mazzini seem to glow:
Such loving men, monarchs alone
Of alien spirits and their own:
Behold him from the tyrant rive
A crown, yet only take to give!
'Tis royal Love's prerogative.

VI

Shout! a king of men is here!
Hurrah!
Our baubles, crowns and titles, gold,
Seem to the man of such a mould
As the wild Indian's glory does,
The war-paint and the scalp, to us:
His glory lies in doing good,
His crown men's hearts, each one imbued
With that same sense of one for all,
He compasseth them grand withal,
So would he have men feel his thrall!

VII

Shout! a king of men is here!
Hurrah!
Not you who, if the incarnate God
Came now, would fix with sapient nod
Your microscopic intellect,
And mince, 'A pimple we detect;'
Since if you rushed to clasp his feet
Like the rude mob so indiscreet,
Rich fumes your nostrils full inhale
From your sweet selves might chance to fail,
The rush would make them hindward trail!

VIII

Shout! a king of men is here!
Hurrah!
Where nobles vie to honour him
Whom God made noblest man of them,
So honouring our lordly class,
I hear two loungers as they pass,
Some dandy man and woman, sneer
'Turn not your back, the king is here!'
If he had kept the crown he took,
How meek that toy would make them look!
Mere naked worth they cannot brook.

IX

Shout! a king of men is here!
Hurrah!
Hoar institutions mouldering stand
Of yore for service wisely planned.
Persian nor Greek nor Arab spilt
Stupendous fanes by Pharaoh built;
Only when earthquake shook the crust
Bowed those 'eternal' piles in dust:
Through desert courts the jackal bays,
The moon o'er unknown symbol strays;
So now the people new power essays.

X

Shout! a king of men is here!
Hurrah!
Old thrones and creeds begin to sway
As the young giant feels for day.
King Philistines have bound his wrist,
Delilah Superstition kissed
His mouth as in her lap he slept,
But crave for light and air hath crept
About his smothered lethargy;
He stirs, he stretches, fetters fly:
Free stalks he, pigmies cowering by!

XI

Shout! a king of men is here!
Hurrah!
Rome bleeding, panting, moment-free
Turned not in vain wild eyes to thee—
Lo! she with Venice turns them yet!
Even now perchance thou mightst have set
Another flaming diadem
On him thy countrymen esteem
Had not his soldiers shot thee down
In act from strife to hold thine own—
Gap gemless in that monarch's crown.

XII

Shout! a king of men is here!
Hurrah!
King even at Aspromonte, hail!
We see thee wounded, worn and pale,
With saddened soul yet tranquil eye
Gaze where rich-vestured mountains lie
Clear-glassed in Spezzia's lakelike sea,
Thy bonds deep shame to Italy:
On prophet vision thy spirit throve—
A world calm as yon seas through love—
Drowned Shelley's spirit here must move!

XIII

We see thee in thine island home,
Caprera ringed with whispering foam,
Set in Mediterranean blue;
Thy goats i' the wild thyme browsing chew;
Thy thoughts go wandering dreamily
Round all the strange sad past and nigh
Yon lowland cursed where faint from day
Thy noble Anita sank for aye:
Yet there unborn great souls shall pray!

XIV

Shout! a king of men is here!
Hurrah!
Now down the traffic-teeming river
A course of molten gold doth quiver
'Neath Westminster's vast-moulded arch,
While o'er it moves thy triumph march.
In far nooks formless shadows cower,
In evening chrysolite yon tower
Mounts o'er the stately palace-pile
Where a free people calm laws compile—
We lack thy selflessness sublime,
Yet tremble, tyrants crowned with crime!
Our hearts with those who strain to climb:
Hail! herald of the dawning time!
Hail! the new world's exuberant prime!

1864

PALMYRA

Listless and weary silently we crouch
Under the sun's intolerable face,
For ever forward heaving dreamily,
Each on his camel with a noiseless foot,
Swift, sure, and silent like the feet of Time,
And nose protruding level on the air:
Our brilliant-hued and flowing-vested guards
Drowsily bowing to the camel-stride,
Our shadows blotted sharp upon the sand,
And ne'er a sound but in the barrel slung,
A gurgling as of wells among the palms!

Anon the imperial tyrant unaware
Declines from empire of the blinding skies.
Some tall mysterious tomb-towers that seemed
To mock us with the promise of their shade
Through the long day now stand upon their heights
Ghostlike and near, until as in a dream
We pass the portals of them, and we solve
That ashen-grey enigma of the hills.

Then bursts upon our breathless souls a sight
Such as they say shall opening overwhelm
The waking vision of the sons of God,
Emergent from the pilgrimage of life.

Behold! amid the illimitable waste
Abides a city glorious with gold
Of arch triumphal, leaguelong colonnade,
Palace and fane with pediment and frieze,
While dominating, mighty like a mountain,
Mounts from their midst the Temple of the Sun,
Eternal based upon stupendous blocks
Poised there by genii, slaves of Solomon.
See yonder, palms—ah! grateful gush of green,
And cool mild flash of water soothing eyes
Cowering from such severity of light!

Ere full the vision enraptured we behold,
Lo! we are sweeping swiftly to the plain
Nigh the enchanted city. Do I wake,
Or weave some glowing fabric in a dream?
I only know the weariness hath passed,
With all oppression on the fevered frame,
All thirst and hunger: I could deem me borne
Out of myself, and mingled with the world!
Why do I weep? we wander in and out
Fair lucent springing arches cored with fire,
By many a votive column, over fret

Fantastic fine of broken tracery,
Loves, fruit, and flowers glowing underfoot.
A silvery serpent-coil is in the eyes
Of yon stone fragment of a hero's head!
Sealike about me sets the wilderness
To realms untravelled; saving where we came;
For there the mountains purple rich with eve,
While many a pillar sunders them with gold,
A mouldering castle of the Saracens
Crowning them, dark athwart the heavenly fire.

Anon among the ruins calls the wind
Whirling the desert in wild revelry,
Crumbled beneath fierce suns of centuries
To sand, and sifted of the searching blast,
Mounding it pale about the ways and walls
Where once Zenobia, queen of all the East,
Flushed and elate with empire and with youth
Drove in her chariot, girt with flaming swords
And dark adoring faces of her lovers,
Flashing another morning from her eyes,
Borne as on wings of music royally!
How long before she looked from yonder height
Her mournful last upon the shattered glory
Of her sweet kingdom with a clouded eye,
Or proudly turned, a captive yet a queen,
Away for ever with Aurelian?
Now the fair city is a skeleton
Whose shell but serves to tesselate blue air.

Now the fair ways once resonant with life,
Vibrant with pulses of world-history,
Feel only stealthy feet of the lean wolf
Or prowling fox; save where our Bedawy
Rush galloping with wild barbaric yell
Poising the quivered lance in mimic charge,
Wheeling and spurning dust, mayhap of men,
To cloud about them—spirits of the blast!
Incarnate winds as lawless and as wild!
Dim limbless Chaos here with Anarchy
And Desolation holds high carnival,
Welters carousing, laughing loud and long
In maniac triumph of reconquering
His ancient lair where once the God of life
Brooded to quicken formless elements
Into a throbbing heart of all mankind!

Dread exultation of primæval Powers
In all-exhaustless fountain of your youth!
Dread celebration of your victory,
And your eternal birthday, in the place
Where ye abode before King Solomon,
And darkling played about the feet of God!
Where ye abide now after the brief hour
That shone with human empire, now the worm
Hath fouled sweet tresses of the queen of men,
And loathly things have littered in her breast!
In your grand triumph, awful yet sublime,
I bear a part, exulting deep with you,

Albeit I weep, remembering what we are!
And yet I know these lives of ours not lost,
Exhaling to enhance the life of God,
Life of all ages freshening evermore! . . . .

For us, dear friend with whom I wandered there
For us the lovely ruin had a voice,
A human message: after then we ranged
Apart, afar; our feeling and our thought
Have known a change; still you may call to mind
That argent moon upfloating large and pure
In dark blue night above the solemn temple
And hush of palm and water; how we lay
Under the open wakeful very long,
So strange and so entrancing all the night!
Ah! soon, how soon, we surely shall decline,
Fade to the indistinguishable whole.
But when the moon shall silver soft our sleep,
Still fair Palmyra beautiful in death
Shall thrill with her weird silence like a spirit
Souls yet unborn to wistful questioning;
They too like fearful children shall implore
And call, nor ever they, nor any one,
Shall hear an answer floating from the void!

1868

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